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The Masters Of Victorian Literature

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The Masters Of Victorian Literature

THE MASTERS OF VICTORIAN LITERATURE

1837-1897

By RICHARD D. GRAHAM

EDINBURGH: JAMES THIN 1897
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PREFACE

THE following pages have been written chiefly for the younger students of English Literature. Existing works on this subject usually stop at the threshold of our own time, but the interest of young students, so far from ending there, is strongly attracted towards the authors of to-day. To gratify their natural curiosity, and especially to foster in them a taste for what is beautiful, and of permanent value in the literature of the Victorian era, is the aim which the author has had in view. No scheme of examination has been present to his thoughts in writing. At the same time he has made ample use of facts, and even of dates, in connection with the personal element in the literature of the period, and has sought to show into what setting of circumstances in the life-history of the writer himself, the works of his genius are to be fitted.

Except in the case of the poets, scarcely any attempt has been made to illustrate by means of extracts. Nevertheless, the study of literature will certainly fail in its highest effect as an educational agent, if the mind be not brought into direct contact with the style and thought of the writers under review. The manner and the extent to which this may be done, must, of course, depend on the tastes and the circum-

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stances of the individual teacher or student. It will scarcely be questioned that to have such a sense of literary beauty as to be able to respond intelligently and sympathetically to what is best and noblest in literature, is to possess one of the fine flowers of a polite education, and to be within reach of a perennial store of exquisite delights.

In dealing with a field so vast as English Literature during the Victorian era, selection was inevitable. Attention, therefore, has been mainly concentrated on the prose fiction and the poetry of the reign ; and while other departments, such as the essay, history, biography, science, and philosophy, have been dealt with more cursorily, some, such as the drama, the literature of travel and adventure, and the much vaster area covered by works in theology and religion, have been altogether omitted. The full and adequate history of Victorian Literature has yet to be written, and will no doubt ere long be produced by some competent pen. All that the present author hopes is that his attempt to set forth what has given interest and pleasure to himself may at least be found helpful to the younger readers for whom the book has been specially designed.

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CHAPTER I

Introductory Retrospect

THE heritage of literature that has fallen to Englishmen in the nineteenth century is the most wonderful that any nation has to show; and the story of its slow development through so many centuries forms one of the most interesting and remarkable chapters in the history of the human mind. There are three periods in this history that stand out prominently from the rest, and specially deserve the attention of the thoughtful student. The first, which is also the greatest in respect of creative genius and enthusiasm, is the Elizabethan age. The next, separated from its predecessor by a not inconsiderable interval of achievement, is the period of Queen Anne, or so-called Augustan age of English literature. The third is that in which we live, and this, although inferior in power to its predecessors, has nevertheless so distinctly marked a character of its own as to deserve the most intimate knowledge we can give it. It stands differently from the others. Viewed in the calm light of distance, their giant forms are seen in their right perspective and true proportions. We know both what they

were in themselves, and what they have become to the generations succeeding.

The unparalleled outburst of fresh and forceful qualities in the best literature of the Elizabethan age cannot but be regarded as a unique phenomenon in the general history of mankind. It may be that great reputations even of that age are destined to pale, and indeed of this there are already indications. Nothing, however, is likely to abate the glory of the great master-spirits of our literature, who shed such amazing lustre around the Elizabethan and Jacobean thrones. In all the highest qualities — creative imagination, vigour and originality of thought, exquisiteness of fancy, depth of humour and of pathos, loftiness of phrase and melody, the literature that gave us Shakespeare, Bacon, and Milton must remain for ever crowned and supreme. And the best proof of its power is to be found in the fact, that after three hundred years this literature is still fresh to us, and that it continues to be the source from which our best minds still draw their highest inspirations.

That can hardly be said of the Augustan age, at least in the same degree. Its concern was with the form rather than with the substance; with the perfecting of the expression of thought rather than with the thought itself. In creative imagination and vigour, both of thought and language, Swift stands chief among his contemporaries, for if he also attains to the correctness and refinement of style at which they aimed, it is at least without sacrificing so much of the

forcefulness of the Elizabethan elements. Mainly, however, to Pope in poetry, and to Addison in prose, belongs the credit of completing the work of the Critical School which Dryden and others began, and of making language, in a manner quite unparalleled up to that time, an adequate instrument for the expression of thought. But thought at its noblest must always transcend speech. This their achievement, therefore, was won by the sacrifice of the deeper elements of thought, feeling, and imagination, which after all are essential to literature in its supreme form. The most predominant quality in these writings, as has been well said, is a glorified common sense. It is not a literature to cause the pulses of men's blood to beat more wildly. The noblest thoughts and ambitions do not spring into the mind as we read. The light that never was by sea or shore seldom visits it. But, on the other hand, it satisfies the understanding with a singular justness of observation, appositeness of reflection, and cogency of argument; and at the same time it gratifies the faculty of taste by the felicitous wedding of thought and language, by the glitter of a marvellously copious wit, by terseness of epigram, and trenchant incisiveness of sarcastic speech. But when English literature thus ceased to make its appeal to the vital elements of thought and natural feeling, and concerned itself chiefly with what was outward and formal, it lost strength, and was but the shadow of itself.

Recovery came with a return to nature and old

traditions. At the close of the eighteenth century English literature began once more to live near to the heart of things, and to become productive. And here it is that the third and latest period is reached—a period still in progress, with a future which it is quite impossible to foresee. The reaction from the chill, lifeless, artificial forms of the eighteenth century had begun before the century was closed. The nature of this quickening and fertilising change can be distinctly seen in the works of Robert Burns and William Cowper. On the intellectual side, literature, to whose service the search-lights of imagination had once more been added, thus began to seek the fundamentals of thought and being, and to demand that all opinion should be able to give a reasonable account of itself. On the emotional side, it expressed sympathy with nature and all natural conditions, and was a cry from the heart on behalf of the wide brotherhood of man. It thus broadened the whole horizon of human thought, feeling, and imagination. But contemporaneously these inward elements of change in our literature were reinforced from without by the new literature of Germany, and still more by startling convulsions in France. The century, now itself dying, was called upon to witness the death of a time-honoured system. A literature with new aims and a new standpoint was required, because a new form of man and of society had emerged. The dumb agony of the nations had found articulate voice at last. Goaded by intolerable wrongs, oppressed peoples saw in the tremendous

upheavals of France the gospel of their salvation. Everywhere throughout Europe, dreams of a better day for reconstructed humanity were voiced anew, especially by the young and hopeful. With all their force of passionate yearning still unspent, they passed into the literature of England—young again in its sanguine outlook, in its genuine sympathy, in the fervour of its enthusiasm, and in its untrammelled freedom from convention. It was amidst such influences as these that the great English writers, whose names are the glory of the early part of the present century, began their work. And although it is true that such men as Wordsworth and Coleridge outlived the influences here described, it is undeniable that these were the fires from which they caught their early inspiration.

But Nineteenth Century literature has this advantage, that it is the heir, not of one age, but of all the ages that have gone before; and that in it, as in a human child, may be seen reflected the contrasted qualities of different parents and progenitors. If there has been a return to the simplicity and natural feeling, the passionate energy, the grappling with the central problems of life and character that marked the literature of our golden age, it has not been at the expense of that carefulness as to beautiful and correct form that characterised the Augustans.

Our business in these pages, however, is not with Nineteenth Century literature as a whole, but only with that portion of it that is properly embraced under the title of The Victorian Age of English Litera-

ture. When Queen Victoria ascended the throne in 1837, one third of the century was gone. Some of its greatest literary reputations could nevermore be added to, because, as in the case of Scott, its largest literary figure, death had already produced its mandate. Of the survivors, not a few had completed their work before the present reign began, while many others still wrote, but produced nothing that materially enhanced their reputation. If, therefore, we divide the century, as seems natural, into two parts—one extending from its commencement to the year 1837, and the other from that year onwards to the present time—such writers as Wordsworth and Southey, Campbell and Moore, Landor and Montgomery, Hazlitt and Lamb, will belong with Scott to the earlier rather than to the later section.

The great poetic revival of the early part of the century, and the no less noteworthy achievements of Sir Walter Scott in prose fiction, are of themselves sufficient to make the greatness of a period. If in the Victorian Age there is nothing that can quite compare with the distinction of Scott as a novelist on the one hand, or the genius of Wordsworth and Shelley, Keats and Byron as poets on the other, at least we may claim that in the multiplication of works of high, if not the highest, excellence in every department of literature, we have a striking characteristic of the times in which we live. But that which is the special distinction of Victorian literature—its marvellous productiveness—must also be the greatest difficulty in

the way of any one who would attempt to sketch, even in outline, the gains it has yielded to English literature, and the reputations it has added to the roll of England's worthies. It is true that the number of writers of the first order is not so great as in some former periods of our literature, but it would be less than the truth to say that there are twenty authors now for one in former times, and it may be confidently asserted that Victorian literature generally is marked by a degree of culture, refinement, and scholarship that is absolutely without a parallel.

The most that such a sketch as these pages contemplate can possibly do, is to make a reasonable selection from the immense variety of material which the present age affords, and map out the main lines along which the English mind of our time has worked and triumphed. To attempt to put a final value, particularly on our younger writers, would be impertinent and foolish. Their future is still before them, and the achievements of that future may not only eclipse their own past, but even shadow some of the greater reputations of former times. In such circumstances the critic's duty is to state conclusions without dogmatism, and with as large a measure of generous hopefulness as possible. The age needs a sanguine outlook. Fears have been too often expressed that English literature is in its decline. To an extent never before known in its history, there is manifest a tendency to judge literary productions, not so much by their intrinsic value, as by the pecuniary possi-

bilities involved in them. Perhaps we cannot be surprised if there are no honest Cottles of Bristol now to court loss by placing such works as 'The Lyrical Ballads' of Wordsworth and Coleridge before an indifferent public. But it may be hoped that somehow before the degradation of literature goes too far, it may be found possible, if not by an English Academy of Letters, by some other device, for works of the highest genius, made to live and not to sell, to receive the stamp of national approval and reward. Genius is very different from the speculative instinct in literature that gauges correctly the wants of the time, and successfully adapts its wares to supply them. Our literature shall indeed be on the down grade, should a time ever come when it shall produce no truly great writers, who, refusing to drift with the times and be their echo, shall keep alive the memory of glorious traditions, and summon the age to a nobler thought and a higher purpose than its own.

CHAPTER II

Earlier Victorian Novelists

The Victorian Novel.—Under the spell of Sir Walter Scott's genius, prose fiction had reached such a height in the literature of the earlier part of the century, that its decline seemed now inevitable. Yet the reign of Victoria had no sooner begun than it became certain that the novel was still to be in the ascendant. He would have been a bold man who should have prophesied that within five years from the death of Scott, a young writer with no advantages of social position or education, should at one bound spring into a reputation as a novelist which, measured by the number of his readers, should equal, if not excel, that of the great Wizard of the North himself. And yet this is what history, speaking of Charles Dickens, has to record. And it has to mention further, that the lead which the novel thus obtained it has never since lost, seeing that it still continues to attract to its service a larger proportion of the best talent of our time than any other department of literature.

That the new outburst meant real progress and not

a mere vagrant spurt of genius, is evident from the fact that so many great novelists, contemporaries with each other, make lustrous the first half of the reign. It might have been supposed that this progress would only have been possible along the lines which Scott had laid down. But the truth is, that while the principal writers of the new period were filled with the warmest admiration of Scott, in none did it take the form of imitation. The subjects of Dickens and Thackeray, of Charlotte Brontë and George Eliot, are not the subjects of the author of *Waverley*, nor is his manner theirs. A true note of originality is present in them all. For when we compare these writers with each other, we find that each has a distinct individuality. The democratic atmosphere of Dickens's novels is not more violently in contrast with the society life of Thackeray's, than are the styles of these two writers with each other. Again, it is scarcely possible to conceive of a point of view and a method of treatment in more complete contrast than are those of Charlotte Brontë and George Eliot.

The latter half of the reign has no names quite so important as these, yet it has well sustained the tradition of great beginnings, even in the quality of its work in fiction, while in the quantity of such work it quite eclipses all former records. The note of originality, however, is not so manifest.

The progress of Victorian fiction has witnessed revivals and new developments of an interesting kind.

After the extraordinary successes of Scott in the sphere of the historical novel, it was natural that he should have many would-be imitators. And undoubtedly, Bulwer Lytton's achievements in this field, although lacking the full distinction of the master, were powerful and brilliant; but the monotonous and heavy productions of a host of writers in the school of G. P. R. James and Harrison Ainsworth brought discredit upon the historical romance. Still, failure cannot altogether be pronounced regarding a period that has produced such brilliant works as the *Esmond* of Thackeray, the *Westward Ho!* and *Hypatia* of Kingsley, and *The Cloister and the Hearth* of Charles Reade.

Quite recently the historical novel has again come into vogue, and it now appears as if a lengthened career of prosperity awaited it. In this revival the way has been led by such writers as Blackmore and Shorthouse, Stanley J. Weyman and Conan Doyle, all of whom have produced fictions of romantic and historical interest, as stimulating as they are true and healthy.

No one can fail to see how much the Problem novel has in our time taken the place of the old tale of domestic incident or of romantic adventure. This is largely due to the more humanitarian and scientific interest that is being felt for all that concerns men and women as they are to be found grouped in the various relations of social life. Much of this writing has the distinct and laudable purpose of correcting what is wrong in that life. Unfortunately not a little

of it is the product of unripe experience and pure faddism, glaring in its extravagances, and as wrong-headed in its diagnosis of social disease as in its haphazard remedies for its cure.

The strangest and least admirable form of this novel and of all the phases of Victorian fiction, is that to which the name 'Neurotic' has been given. In its hysterical vehemence, its want of judgment and of art, its unreserve and ignorance of life, together with its unhealthy insistance upon the woman's relations to the other sex, we see the work mainly of women of a highly-strung nervous temperament, of a crude, ill-regulated, and hurtful genius. Happily this disease of Victorian fiction has passed its crisis, and the British novel would seem to have emerged once more into a healthier atmosphere. The phenomenal success, however, of some of these writers will doubtless remain one of the curiosities of literature in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

The true antidote to this kind of writing has been found in the tale of Romantic Adventure, which also has had its revival in the last decade of Victorian fiction. Dealing with subjects far remote from present day introspectiveness, concerning itself solely with elementary passions in the simplest and most primitive situations, it substitutes for the hectic discontents and morbid broodings of the home that form so large a part of the unsavoury neurotic fiction, strong faith and simple valour, daring the most desperate hazards to redress the wrong, to defend the

right, or, it may be, simply to achieve the triumph of an almost impossible adventure. As we read such tales, a breath as of the strong mountain air blows round us, and the novel seems to be won back to the old sweet wholesomeness it once had under Scott.

A somewhat unaccountable success has also attended a certain form of the religious novel, in which the mental conflicts of a soul slowly drifting away from old beliefs is made the subject of a representation, often far from true or convincing, but successful, probably because of the curiosity it awakens in both the friends and the foes of orthodoxy. The writer who has most largely profited by this phase is Mrs Humphry Ward, whose *Robert Elsmere*, however, has qualities of genius quite sufficient to establish a reputation apart from such adventitious circumstances.

There seems no just reason to despair of the English novel, or to fear that because of the fermenting processes through which it has recently passed, it will not settle down to something worthy of its great traditions. Its true corrective will be found in the popular taste, and that, notwithstanding certain unaccountable aberrations, is on the whole sound and healthy, and gives the assurance that the best works in fiction will still have the best chance of ultimate success.

Charles Dickens (1812-1870).—Any review of Victorian fiction will naturally begin with the im-

mortal author of *Pickwick*, published in the first year of Queen Victoria's reign. Charles Dickens was born on February 7th, 1812, at Landport, a suburb of Portsea, Hampshire, but his earliest recollections were of the Medway and the green lanes around Rochester, whither the family had removed on his father's obtaining a situation in the Chatham dockyard. He was a feeble child, and at an age when other boys were at their sports, was engaged, as he tells us, in devouring Fielding and Smollett, Goldsmith and Defoe. The vivid imagination of the boy would also seem to have been stimulated by interesting local associations. Witness the story he tells of Gadshill Place, an important house, situated high on the road between Rochester and Gravesend, to which partly by features in itself, and partly by old Shakespearian traditions concerning it, his childish fancies and desires were so strongly drawn—a house which Dickens afterwards made his own, lived, wrote, and died in.

At this time no dream could have seemed less likely of accomplishment. The family fortunes were far from prosperous, and when a removal to London was effected, circumstances grew worse instead of better. It must have been now that Charles became apprentice in Mr Lamert's blacking manufactory, an experience which was full of humiliation for him, and which he has described for us in the opening chapters of *David Copperfield*. These experiences were, however, not without their uses. Consciously or unconsciously, the observant and sensitive boy was storing

up the rude outlines of many scenes and characters in humble life which he was afterwards to make illustrious. Not a few of the personages now so vividly familiar to us have been traced to the men and women he met, talked, and bargained with in these days of youthful repression and neglect.

But a legacy reached the elder Dickens, and Charles was once more put to school. What he did there during the next three years we do not know, but there is no reason to suppose that he was ever a brilliant pupil. At fifteen we find him in a lawyer's office, but influenced by his father's example, he soon abandoned the law to become a Reporter for the Press. At this work he was soon exceedingly expert, and in his nineteenth year, we find him engaged as Parliamentary Reporter to the *True Sun*. That even this life did not quite satisfy him, is evident from the fact that he spent much time and labour in qualifying himself for the stage. Fortunately, however, he found his true vocation in literature. How this came about he has himself told us. He had dropped his first paper—the sketch called *Mr Minns and his Cousin*—into the letter-box of *The Monthly Magazine*, and had the satisfaction of seeing it shortly afterwards in print. A series of similar sketches followed in the pages of the same magazine, and afterwards in those of the *Evening Chronicle*. These were collected and published in 1836 as *Sketches by Boz*. In the same year he was asked to contribute some comic sketches to accompany a series of amusing sporting plates. Dickens

consented, and out of this proposal grew the inimitable *Pickwick Papers*, a work done with so much humour, and such an exuberance of healthy animal spirits, that it became unboundedly popular, and placed their author in the front rank of English humourists. It still shows in the opinion of many the floodmark of its author's genius. Then came in rapid succession a series of powerful stories containing the best work that has come from his pen—*Oliver Twist* and *Nicholas Nickleby* in 1838, *The Old Curiosity Shop* in 1840, *Martin Chuzzlewit* and *A Christmas Carol* in 1843, *Dombey & Son* in 1846, and *David Copperfield* in 1849.

Dickens was only twenty-six when the publication of the *Pickwick Papers* put him in the enviable position of the most popular author of any age or country. Henceforth there is little that is eventful in his career; it is for the most part the history of his books, and of the successive triumphs of a reputation that never sensibly declined.

In the year 1853 Dickens appeared as a public reader of his own writings, and his mastery of dramatic resource, combined with the popularity of these writings themselves, brought him a signal success. In every town he visited crowds flocked to his entertainments, which furnished impersonations of his most famous characters, done with remarkable power and vividness. He was equally successful in interpreting the pathos of *Dombey* and *David Copperfield*, the humour of *Pickwick* and *Martin Chuzzlewit*,

and the blending of both humour and pathos in *Dr Marigold* and the *Christmas Carol*. These inimitable readings brought him wealth, but it was dearly purchased, for the strain which they put upon him was excessive, and undoubtedly shortened his life.

The judgment of posterity respecting Dickens will, of course, concern only the writings themselves. And how far that judgment is likely to endorse his unparalleled popularity with his own generation is fairly open to question. Unlike Scott, his works owe nothing to the glamour of distance or the romance of great historic names. They take their subjects and their characters from the common-place people and incidents of to-day; and it may be that as the gradual progress of society removes the abuses which Dickens, rather perversely, loved to expose, much of the point of his peculiar humour will be lost. Even now the doings of Mr Squeers have an air of unreality, so different are things educational from what they were sixty years ago. The same remark applies to Dickens's exposure of the petty tyrannies of Bumbledom in *Oliver Twist*, and other abuses of the past which are made the subjects of his humorous sallies. The politics of Dickens, however, must not be taken seriously. The inaccuracy of his denunciations of social and political abuses is no less manifest than the futility of his remedies. It might seem at first that Dickens's merit as a writer is above all that of the Realist in fiction. But in fact it is not so.

For, however clearly he may have apprehended the models from which he sketched, what most amuses and interests us in his characters is the element, humorous or pathetic, which his own imagination in reminiscence has supplied. It has even been doubted if one real man, woman, or child, free from caricature and exaggeration, can be found in the whole gallery of Dickens portraits. Fortunately he so far realised his own limitations, and, except on a few unhappy occasions, set himself to depict only the classes he knew best. His knowledge of the poor was as wide and accurate as his sympathy with them was real and true. It was from them and the class immediately above them that he drew his subjects. Any excursions beyond, among the upper ten thousand or even the higher middle class, brought failure, signal and complete. Future generations of readers are not likely, therefore, to receive much guidance from the Dickens writings as to nineteenth century politics and sociology, nor will they be safe in culling from them, as realistic and exact, a picture of England or Englishmen of any class, even the poorest, in his day.

The style of Dickens may perhaps prove an even greater stumbling-block. Great in genius, he is often feeble in art. He is never a careless writer, often indeed he labours his style, yet cannot produce the effects he seeks to attain. A certain want of distinction, sometimes passing into actual vulgarity, is noticeable in him. Moreover, his flagrant mannerisms and

frequent offences against good taste irritate the more because of the contrast which these passages present with others written in his better manner. These things, due doubtless to the circumstances of his early life and training, which he never altogether overcame, are manifest to the most cursory reader, and are peculiarly objectionable to readers of a cultivated intelligence.

A healthy moral influence undoubtedly pervades all he has written. He is invariably and unmistakably on the side of goodness, and has not written a page that can call a blush to the most sensitive cheek. Still, the distinctly marked limitation with which Dickens exercised his great powers is as definite on the moral as it is on the intellectual side. In both there are things that lie for ever beyond him, and it would be no less vain to look in Dickens for the high ethical purpose and power of George Eliot than to expect to find in him the brilliant incisiveness of Thackeray's thought and style.

The opinion is commonly, and perhaps rightly, expressed that he owed his great popularity in the past, and will owe his popularity in the future, to the fact that no writer in pure literature, in our own or in any language, has come so near the heart of the people as Dickens. The phrase that one constantly hears respecting him, is that there was more sunshine in the world after he began to write, and that the infection of his own good-nature and kindly warmth of heart and lively animal spirits extended

to his readers. If so, and there is no reason to doubt it, this is high praise, and bespeaks a public benefactor no less than a great literary artist. In the *Christmas Carol*, the best of his shorter stories, he has focussed the bright and hopeful philosophy that runs through all his writings—that poverty is not necessarily sordid; that it is possible to be poor and yet neither mean nor unhappy; that virtue may bloom in the hovel or the garret as beautifully as in the palace; and that though the rich could scarcely have guessed it, idylls of purest devotion and love, worthy even of a laureate's pen, may be working themselves out in the lives of the very poor at the rich man's door. The warmth and sacredness of a humble home have a singular attraction for him. What a delight he has in the manly, hard-handed, soft-hearted men he finds under those smoky rafters and within these bare walls! How tenderly he depicts the goodness of their women, and with what an inimitable blending of pathos and humour he illustrates the quaint fancies of their children! Whatever the actual results may have been, it was a high intention on the part of Dickens to fill up the breach between class and class; and at least he will have honour for revealing to the masses the nobleness of which they were themselves capable, and for such general sweetening of life as came from his gift of innocent laughter and wholesome tears. It does not seem unreasonable to suppose that from his genial views of life, there came home to many of his readers lessons of kindness and forbearance, and

that the parable of Scrooge again and again repeated itself as the frost was thawed from sordid hearts, and as courage, hope, and faith revived in those who had been tempted to despair under the pressure of life's burdens.

But besides this overflowing kindliness and spirit of goodwill, there was in Dickens a genius of a high order. Of the characteristic qualities of this genius we may note particularly his astonishing faculty of observation, his fertility of invention, his inexhaustible humour, and his pathos. Observation with him was less a habit than a natural endowment. Fortunately it was coupled with a tenacious memory, which enabled him at all points of his career to lay in a store of serviceable material for future literary uses. Nothing escaped his eye, and nothing once seen was ever forgotten. This was especially true of London, in the crowds of which he found so much to stimulate and to inspire. No one loved the great city better than he, and there are few that can have known it so well. Probably had there been no London, with its sins and sorrows, its crime-haunted slums, its wretched courts and alleys, and its mouldering wharves, there would have been no Dickens as we know him.

But observation in Dickens was, after all, only the servant of the higher faculty of imagination. No one will question the fertility of his invention. What English author, if we except Shakespeare and Sir Walter Scott, has added so many entirely original creations to our literature as he—creations that are

more to us than mere fancies, that live embalmed in our hearts and memories as persons we have seen and known, have loved and laughed at?

The humour of Dickens, however, is perhaps his most characteristic quality, although it is not easily to be distinguished from his imagination. Nor can it well be separated from his pathos, for in Dickens, as in life, laughter and tears lie very close together, and he is never more successful than when passing in swift transitions from the one to the other. Witness how our moods alternate between the grotesqueries of Mr Toots and the plaintive other-world melodies that fill the ears of poor little Dombey; how the pathos of Tiny Tim thrills through all the hilarity of the *Christmas Carol;* or again, how the heart-broken interjections of Dr Marigold to his dying daughter burst in upon the merry patter of the market place.

Pickwick, on the whole, may still be held to be Dickens's most unique achievement in the field of humour, and whatever may be the general verdict regarding him, his right to be considered one of the greatest humourists of the century is not likely to be called in question.

His pathos will by no means command the same unanimity of approval. To many readers this quality in Dickens wears an air of unreality. They do not find it natural or spontaneous, and are irritated by the manner in which, often through many pages together, he sets himself to work upon the feelings of his readers. At the same time, if we are to judge by its

recorded impression upon men so different as Lords Jeffrey and Cockburn, Daniel O'Connell and Thackeray, to say nothing of innumerable less distinguished readers whom the pathos of Dickens has melted into tears, it also must be regarded as a noticeable quality in his works.

Dickens attempted the historical novel, in *Barnaby Rudge* (1840) and *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859), but with no great success. It must be confessed also that all his later works, such as *The Child's History of England* (1851), *Bleak House* (1854), *Little Dorrit* (1855), *Great Expectations* (1858), and *Our Mutual Friend* (1864), show a decided falling-off in power, although there is not one that does not in certain parts reveal the hand of the master. Whatever may be the fate of these, it is to be hoped that the fine work which preceded the middle of the century will be sufficient to give to Dickens a permanent place in English literature as a writer of undoubted genius and of singular devotion to his art.

Charles Dickens died suddenly in his fifty-eighth year at Gadshill, on the 9th of June 1870, leaving unfinished a tale entitled *Edwin Drood*. He now lies in Westminster Abbey, surrounded by the dust of many of the greatest masters of Fancy that ever lived, not one of whom has carried into that dim sanctuary a larger share of the warm English heart.

William Makepeace Thackeray (1811-1863).—This writer, so often spoken of as the rival of Dickens,

was born at Calcutta in 1811, his father being in the Civil Service of the East India Company. When he was seven years of age he was sent to the Charterhouse School, London. Subsequently he studied at Cambridge for three years, and had for fellow students, the three Tennysons, the younger Hallam, Kinglake, Edward Fitzgerald, and others afterwards known in the world of letters. Thackeray, who seems to have taken his studies lightly, left without a degree, and proceeded to visit the various continental capitals for the purpose of studying art, in the direction of which his tastes at this time inclined him. From his father he had inherited a fortune of £10,000, but this appears to have been quickly lost in unfortunate speculations, or squandered in the careless, generous Bohemianism of his life at this time. This, however, is scarcely to be regretted, seeing that in the necessity of choosing a profession with which it confronted him, Thackeray found his true vocation in the pen.

He began his career as a writer in the pages of *Fraser's Magazine*, for which and other periodicals he wrote scores of papers of every description, under such pseudonyms as 'Fitzboodle' and 'Michael Angelo Titmarsh.' Much of this work has the inimitable Thackerayan flavour, but much also is very unequal, even poor in quality, and no doubt had but scanty pecuniary results. Still, if the financial gains were meagre, these efforts were at least useful in giving him that command of literary resource which

similar work had given to Fielding, his great master in fiction, and fitted him to become ere long the greatest social satirist, and perhaps the chief master of style among British novelists.

In 1846 *Vanity Fair* began to appear in monthly parts, and Thackeray's reputation was established. He never counted anything like the number of readers Dickens had. But if the audience he addressed was comparatively small, it was one of which he had every reason to be proud. There were not a few, and those excellent judges of literary art, who saw in Thackeray the greatest novelist since Scott. The attitude of the general public towards him was not so favourable. His tone was too bitter, and his eye for the evil in human nature too keen for popular liking. However much the ordinary reader might admire the cleverness of his dissections of moral deformity and disease, it seemed impossible to relish them. Contrasted with the genial optimism of Dickens, with which the British public had grown familiar, the 'vanitas vanitatum' of Thackeray was chilling and repugnant. It was not altogether wonderful, therefore, that the reputation of cynicism should so persistently cling to him. Even in his social appearances there was a something that seemed to give the same impression. Yet we have it on the testimony of those who knew him best, that he was a man, not only of rare geniality and kindliness, but even of a feminine softness and tenderness of heart.

Vanity Fair sufficiently differentiates the spheres of

Dickens and of Thackeray ; for whereas the former sets himself to exhibit the human worth and goodness that are to be found in very poor homes and amidst very sordid surroundings, the latter exposes the meannesses and shams, the falsehoods and profligacy of life in certain portions of upper-class society. It is first and emphatically as a Realist in fiction that Thackeray claims attention in the pages of *Vanity Fair*. In styling it 'a novel without a hero,' he wishes it to be understood that his business is not with the ideal or heroics of life, but with life and human character as he knows them ; at their best too often marred by glaring inconsistencies and faults ; at their worst seldom without gleams of an occasional goodness. Far as human nature is in Thackeray's view from being perfect or comely, he loves it still. Amelia Sedley, the good woman of the story, may be as sweet and pure and tender, and also as selfish and blind and unreasonable as love can make her. But it is so that he finds women. Thackeray looks round the world and cannot discover the stilted and immaculate heroines of the older fiction, but he finds the world full of Amelia Sedleys, and for his part, he thinks it much the better for having them. The true heroine of the book is Becky Sharp, a clever, scheming, heartless, and utterly unscrupulous adventuress. For all her cleverness and brilliant audacity, he is never for a moment in love with her, is never even cheated into partiality or admiration, but from beginning to end pursues her with a rancour that at length seems

scarcely just to the creature of his own imagination. The good woman of his novel, it must be confessed, is very frequently silly, while the bad one is marvellously, and, on occasion, even splendidly clever. But so Thackeray has found women, and he professes to paint them as he finds them.

George Osborne ought to be the hero of *Vanity Fair*, and in truth is handsome and outwardly attractive enough; but in all higher qualities he is almost beneath contempt. What more can be said in his praise than that he won and retained the love of one of the sweetest and purest of women? Major Dobbin, with whom he is contrasted, is everything externally that the conventional hero of fiction ought not to be—uncouth and ridiculous, rough and forbidding. It is, however, within this ungainly casket that Thackeray places a truly beautiful soul, honest and brave, patient and unselfish, true and faithful. With the fortunes of these four persons the story is mainly concerned. But there are besides many others—Joseph Sedley, the older Osborne, and the Crawleys—all drawn to the life, and with a pencil that never falters. Whether we like his views of life and of society or not, we cannot help feeling that these pictures are as true in outline as they are faithful in detail. Thackeray never fails in his purpose to amuse, but in the exercise of his sterner functions as a moralist and censor, he may sometimes arouse a sentiment of pity for the puppets of his fancy on whom he has brought down with such terrible effect the lash of his retributory satire.

The tone of the later novels from Thackeray's pen is somewhat less bitter, and more of his real heart is revealed in them. They undoubtedly, with one exception, came short of the freshness, the wit, and the magnificent art of *Vanity Fair*, but they were more mellow, and, on the whole, confirmed the impression of his unequalled qualities, both as a delineator of life and character, and as a master of clear and incisive style.

Pendennis, the second of his novels, was published in 1849, and contained, it is believed, many episodes from his own early history and experience. For this reason, doubtless, it was of all his works that which the members of his own family prized the most. To readers in general it will not appeal so strongly. The author has grown more digressive, and is even more lacking in forethought and plan than in *Vanity Fair*. The characters, however, are as clearly cut and life-like as in the former work, and the lash is laid with as firm a hand on the falsehoods and profligacies of society. The hero is Pendennis, but there is nothing even admirable in him, although he is less contemptible than the George Osborne of *Vanity Fair*. A foil for the character of the hero is found in the really fine qualities of his friend George Warrington. The good woman of this story is Laura, whom Pendennis finally marries, but never deserves: the bad one is Blanche Amory. The latter is one of those remarkable delineations that can only be found in Thackeray. She is Becky Sharp over again, but

Becky with a difference. For Becky, notwithstanding all her evil doings, the reader retains a secret liking; for Blanche Amory he never has anything but detestation. The art required to produce two characters equally objectionable and so much alike, yet so different in the final impression which they leave upon the reader's mind, is very remarkable. Here are the usual subsidiary characters, Major Pendennis, the Fotheringay, drunken Jack Costigan her father, and many others, whose humours and eccentricities give us infinite amusement, and whose portraits stand out in a wonderful vividness and reality. Yet, on the whole, Thackeray rather lost ground with *Pendennis*.

That, however, cannot be said of *Esmond*, which followed in 1852. For while it is probably the least popular of his larger works with readers in general, it is undoubtedly the most beautiful and artistically perfect of all his writings. The scene is laid in the time of Queen Anne, the manners of whose reign are described with wonderful fidelity and art. Swift, Steele, and Addison are introduced into its pages, and the most astonishing thing is the manner in which the author uses throughout their style—the prose style of Queen Anne's reign—apparently without effort and with a certainty that very seldom lapses into nineteenth century phraseology. There is a compactness about this work which shows how much the writer has himself in hand, and which, no less than the accuracy of his reproductions of bygone life and manners, proves how careful and complete had been

his preparations for a work which he intended and hoped to make his most artistic production. And whatever may be the popular opinion, it is so regarded still by all the best judges of literary work.

The Newcomes was published in the same year 1852, and contained towards its close the most pathetic writing that has come from Thackeray's pen. *The Virginians* (1858) was a continuation of *Esmond*, and gave clever sketches of life and manners in the time of the second and third Georges. It vividly depicted a society much of which was cruelly selfish and corrupt, given over to deep potations and a passion for play. As in *Esmond*, we move amongst a very distinguished company. Here are my Lord Chesterfield and gruff Samuel Johnson, bourgeois Mr Richardson and his attendant court of fair ladies, David Garrick and Mrs Peg Woffington, General Wolfe, the hero of Quebec, and the still more famous General George Washington of America. It is customary to see in *The Virginians* the proofs of Thackeray's decline. It certainly has not the supreme merits of *Esmond*; but in what other author shall we find such presentments of character, such brilliance of wit, such sparkling repartee, such a mellow wisdom in the perhaps too frequent moralisings, such an animation and dramatic force in many of its scenes? Besides the two brothers Esmond, there are three female characters that are done with admirable insight and power, Madam Esmond of Virginia, the younger Countess of Castlewood, and the Baroness Bernstein. The latter especially is a

most interesting study, and shows the beautiful but worldly Beatrix of *Esmond* in her unhonoured decline. *The Virginians* has none of the compactness of *Esmond*. What story there is undoubtedly drags, and long before it finally loses itself in a not very interesting history of the American War of Independence, begins to creak ominously.

A falling off in power was undoubtedly manifest in *Lovel the Widower*, written for the *Cornhill Magazine* in 1861, and *The Adventures of Philip*, contributed to the same magazine in 1862. The charming *Roundabout Papers*, a series of chatty and discursive essays from the editorial chair of the *Cornhill*, are, however, amongst the most characteristic and delightful of Thackeray's writings, for besides their beauties of style, they have the autobiographical interest of a personal revelation. In them we can see the real Thackeray himself—in his strength and in his weakness, his simple vanity, his sensitiveness to adverse criticism, his boyish exuberance, and his painful softness of heart, that turned the editorial chair into a nest of hornets, and made it almost impossible for him to decline a contribution, however unsuitable, when backed by the plea of poverty.

His numerous shorter sketches, in prose and verse, including his contributions to *Punch*, many of them scarcely worthy of Thackeray's genius, others full of exquisite characterisations and amusing drollery, and all bearing some traces of the master hand, have been already referred to, and may be said to cover the whole

period of his literary activity. Of these the most important are *Barry Lyndon*, *The Snob Papers*, and *The Hoggarty Diamond*.

It is always easy to pick holes even in the best work of a man so unmethodical, so desultory and habitually indolent, so frequently prostrated by serious derangements of health, and so much under the influence of self-distrust and other passing moods of the moment as Thackeray unfortunately was. His stoutest admirers must often feel irritated by the contrast between the heights to which he sometimes rises, and the depths to which he occasionally falls. No doubt the contrast was most of all felt by Thackeray himself. The frivolousness of much of his satire, to say nothing of his egotisms, his often wearisome repetitions, the general formlessness of even his greatest works in fiction, and the dulness into which they were too apt to run, caused some of his oldest and most attached friends, like Edward Fitzgerald, greatly to grieve and almost to despair. The defects of Thackeray as a writer are certainly not far to seek; neither, on the other hand, are his peculiar and brilliant merits. The latter fortunately will suffice to give him a permanent place among the greatest writers of British fiction.

In 1851 Thackeray broke new ground by delivering in the principal towns of England and Scotland a course of Lectures on the English Humourists of the Eighteenth Century. Although he had no special insight or qualifications of knowledge as a critic, these

Lectures were extremely successful, because of their fine presentation not only of the dead wits and men of genius of a past century, but also of Thackeray himself in all the best elements of his style. Another course on the subject of *The Four Georges* followed, and, though inferior to the former series, added both to the means and the reputation of their author. The scathing indignation, the biting irony, the touching pathos, the bursts of noble eloquence, and the brilliant incisiveness throughout, are his, and his only.

Denis Duval, Thackeray's last work, had only run through a few numbers of the *Cornhill Magazine* when death came to him silently as he slept on the Christmas Eve of 1863. He was in his fifty-second year, and in the fulness of his ripened powers, with the prospect, as it seemed, of much good work still before him. His death was a surprise in more senses than one. It may be said that the great novelist was not fully understood or appreciated till after his death. But the grave had not closed over him before one and another came forward to bear testimony to his kindly sympathy, and to the generosity with which he had ever been ready, even when little able to afford it, to help his struggling brethren of the literary craft. A man of more tender and genuine affections had never lived, they said, than William Makepeace Thackeray. And this, which is the testimony of all his friends, we may accept as the final verdict respecting him. And yet the real Thackeray has probably still to be revealed to us. Even those

most intimate with him confess that they did not altogether understand him. He was not the same to different people, nor even always the same to the same people. We shall know him better if it be remembered that a blight had early fallen upon his home. Quite at the beginning of his literary career, his young wife, with whom for three years he appears to have been entirely happy, was overtaken by mental disease, had to be removed from his home, and never afterwards rejoined him. It is touching to know that, though thus stricken, she survived her husband for the long period of thirty years, having died so recently as 1892. It is matter of regret that so far there is of Thackeray no adequate memorial in literary form. From his daughter, Mrs Anne Thackeray Ritchie, the inheritor of so many of her father's gifts, and the author of *The Story of Elizabeth*, *Old Kensington*, and other fine tales, might have been expected that worthy and complete life of her father which the world has waited for so long. And it is understood that only his own wish has prevented this service of love from being rendered long ago. Recently the silence has been partially broken, and some pleasant glimpses of Thackeray have been obtained in Mrs Ritchie's delightful *Chapters from some Memoirs*, but these only make us wish for more.

Meanwhile we may be sure that when the whole Thackeray is presented to our view, although we may see a character thoroughly human in its faults and weaknesses, we are not likely to find occasion to

alter the opinion expressed at the time of his death, that in all English literature there has been no man of equal intellectual gifts, more manly, honourable, true, or kind than he.

Charlotte Brontë (1816-1855).—There is no more interesting life-story in the history of Victorian literature than that of the Brontës. This is not because of anything peculiarly eventful in it, but because of the vivid and striking personalities growing out of strange environments which it presents to our view. Charlotte Brontë, who is mainly responsible for the family distinction, was born at Thornton, near Bradford, Yorkshire, on April 21, 1816. On her father, the Rev. Patrick Brontë, being appointed Vicar of Haworth, near Keighley, the family took up their abode in the sombre parsonage, perched high above the steep and straggling village, upon the edge of the grey Yorkshire moors, the solitudes and ever-changing moods of which were afterwards to be so dear and intimate to their hearts. Seen in all the glory of midsummer, it had its own attractiveness, and was a home not unmeet for the strong and ardent natures to which it was to be a lifelong source of education and companionship.

The privations in the lot of the youthful Brontës were probably less than Mrs Gaskell in her fine life of Charlotte Brontë has supposed. No doubt they lived remote from society, and were almost entirely dependent upon themselves for both enjoyment and

stimulus. But we can scarcely think that the outer landscape of a home which they loved with so passionate a devotion could in any degree be responsible for the tinge of sadness apparent in them. The inner circumstances of their home life were undoubtedly peculiar, although even these seem to have been painted in darker colours than the facts really justify. Shortly after coming to Haworth, Mrs Brontë died, leaving six children, five girls and one boy, the eldest of whom, Maria, was then eight years of age, and Anne, the youngest, two. In due course Miss Branwell, Mrs Brontë's sister, arrived to keep house for them ; but she found the bleak air of the Yorkshire moors too great a change from her Cornish home, and went as seldom as possible beyond the limits of her own room. Thus the children saw but little of her, and were still dependent upon their own resources.

Mr Brontë himself was a man of eccentric habits. It cannot be said that he consciously or of set purpose neglected his children. But he was reticent and solitary, though kind, and certainly had not that knowledge of their everyday doings which he might have been expected to have. All his meals except breakfast he appears to have taken alone, and when not engaged in parish business was generally to be found among his books. The stories told of his stormy and uncertain temper are without doubt exaggerated; at least there is no evidence of harshness towards his motherless children. He was a scholar and man of books, had him-

self published several volumes in prose and verse, and seems not only to have taught his children well, but, better still, to have imbued them with a quite unusual taste for good and healthy literature. He appears, moreover, to have treated them as intelligent companions, and talked freely to them of the subjects that most deeply interested himself. In addition to all this, he had a wonderful gift of story-telling, and we have it on the testimony of Miss Nussey, Charlotte's most intimate friend, who often stayed at the Parsonage, that when Mr Brontë related his tales his children would forget everything, even the meal of which they were partaking, and would be sometimes melted with their pathos, and sometimes thrilled with their horror. It would appear, therefore, that in the story of their remarkable development, the effect of his strong personality has not been sufficiently dwelt upon.

The following words from Mr Brontë's communication to Mrs Gaskell bring both him and his children before us in a pleasant light: 'When mere children, as soon as they could read and write, Charlotte and her brother and sisters used to invent and act little plays of their own, in which the Duke of Wellington, my daughter Charlotte's hero, was sure to come off conqueror; when a dispute would not unfrequently arise amongst them regarding the comparative merits of him, Buonaparte, Hannibal, and Cæsar. When the argument got warm and rose to its height, as their mother was then dead, I had sometimes to come in

as arbitrator and settle the dispute, according to the best of my judgment.'

In July 1824 this interesting group of eager children, who were thus doing so much to educate each other, was broken up, when Maria and Elizabeth, the two eldest, were sent to a recently opened school for the daughters of the clergy at Cowan's Bridge, near Kendal. They were followed shortly after in the same year by Charlotte and Emily. It was an unfortunate change for all. Probably under the happiest circumstances the restraints of school life would have proved peculiarly irksome and disagreeable to children accustomed, as they were, to the wild freedom of the moors, and the vigorous intellectual give and take of their nursery at home. The disastrous effects indeed were soon manifest. In the spring of 1825 Maria had grown so weak that her father was sent for. He took her home, but only to die. One month later the next sister, Elizabeth, died also. Charlotte and Emily stayed on at Cowan's Bridge till Christmas of this year, when they left it for good. The special interest of this episode in the Brontë life turns on the fact that Charlotte has in the opening portions of *Jane Eyre* described just such a school, and that the sufferings of Helen Burns in the story have been generally identified with those of her sister Maria. On the other hand, it has been maintained that the school founded by the Rev. Carus Wilson did not deserve the evil reputation thus fastened upon it; but such is the power of genius that probably its

character will always be gathered, not from the testimony of actual facts, but from the brilliant pages of the novelist.

Charlotte, the eldest surviving child of the family, was now ten years of age, and for the next five years is to be regarded as the centre of that lively parliament of children, by whom all men and things of interest were once more eagerly and passionately discussed. Endless were the projects as to books passing through these busy brains. The fierce and vehement energy of their race was in them. What their brains had fashioned, their hands committed to paper in numberless tales and dramas. An abnormal imagination in these children worked up the material absorbed from books and newspapers. Dr Wright in *The Brontës in Ireland* (1893), a work the accuracy of which has been seriously impugned by Angus M. Mackay and others, seeks to show that they were still more indebted for these materials to what they had learned of the fascinating but horrifying Brontë life lying in the dim background of their father's history. According to Dr Wright's view, their minds were early filled with conceptions of deep wrongs and bitter sorrows endured by a romantic and stalwart race of ancestors, warm and passionate, as vigorous and free of speech as they were stout of limb and muscle, as lively of fancy as they were full of Celtic superstition. It was not heredity only, according to this view, but their father's personality, and these tales together, that

put the imprint of so vehement a genius upon all that Charlotte and Emily afterwards did.

In January 1831, we find Miss Brontë a pupil in Miss Wooler's school at Roehead, between Leeds and Huddersfield. Her life here was happy and stimulating, and was productive of some of her most cherished friendships. Miss Wooler herself had much to tell that was interesting to her pupil, and that was forthwith added to the raw material Miss Brontë was storing up for future use. In 1832 she was back again in Haworth. Two years later she returned to Roehead as teacher, her sister Emily accompanying her as pupil. The latter, however, could not live without the freedom of her home and the excitement of the moors, and was therefore back in Haworth within three months. As for Charlotte, we may take it for granted that her career at Miss Wooler's could not have been more than a moderate success, in the light of her own confession, that she neither liked teaching nor felt drawn towards children. She held this position, however, for several years, and afterwards was governess in more than one private family. In 1842 there came relief from these distasteful circumstances when Charlotte and Emily went to Brussels to perfect themselves in foreign languages with the view of succeeding Miss Wooler in her school. The means for carrying out this project came out of Miss Branwell's pocket, and it was her serious illness in the October of the same year that recalled the sisters, only, however, to find

their aunt dead on their return. Charlotte, not without misgivings, returned to Brussels to teach English in the *pensionnat* of M. Heger, whom she has immortalised as the Paul Emanuel of *Villette*. The new arrangement did not meet her expectations, and at the close of the year she came home, where she remained during the next two years.

It was in 1846 that the sisters made their first literary venture, in the form of a small volume of *Poems by Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell*. It was published at their own expense, and it is more than probable that they were never repaid the thirty guineas which it had cost them to print it. But if the great world remained cruelly indifferent to so important an event, at least they had the pleasure of seeing themselves for the first time in print, and were not altogether without encouragement from the press. All these poems were respectable, but the only ones, as Charlotte has observed, that showed any real gift of poetry were those above the signature of Ellis Bell (Emily).

Dark clouds had been gathering over Haworth Parsonage for some time. Old Mr Brontë had become almost blind from cataract. The efforts made by the sisters to obtain pupils had failed. Worse than all was the fact that their brother Branwell, whom they had always fondly but mistakenly regarded as the genius and hope of the family, had taken to evil courses, and become a confirmed drunkard. This shadow deepened in blackness as

time went on, and it could only have been a relief to those hearts so nearly broken by his misconduct, when he died in September 1848. The sisters did not abate their literary efforts. Each of them had written a tale which they offered to the publishers. Strange to say, Charlotte's *The Professor* was rejected by all, while *Wuthering Heights* by her sister Emily, and *Agnes Grey* by her sister Anne were accepted. At length, however, after many wanderings, *The Professor* reached the hands of Messrs Smith & Elder, who also refused it, but coupled with their refusal some kindly words of encouragement, stating that they would be glad to see a story in three volumes from her pen. Fortunately she had by this time nearly finished *Jane Eyre*, and when in compliance with this invitation she sent this story, in August 1847, to the London firm, it was immediately accepted. There was never any doubt of its success. The public bought it eagerly, and although the critics were cautious, on the whole Miss Brontë had no reason to complain, always excepting an infamous attack made upon her in an article which appeared in the *Quarterly Review*, and which is now known to have been from the pen of Miss Rigby, afterwards Lady Eastlake. *Jane Eyre* might not be strictly conventional; it might indeed be chargeable with a frankness and directness of speech not customary in polite society. It showed ignorance of life and many crudities. But then how living and inwardly true it was! The heroine was of course the author herself,

and here, if ever, was to be seen a human soul bared in all its intensity to the public gaze. Where shall we find a book more sincere and earnest? With what an impetuous energy it hurries its readers from scene to scene! Its range may be narrow, the projection of the author's personality may be too obtrusive, and the saving grace of humour may be too conspicuous by its absence. But, on the other hand, how vivid is its imagination, how fine its eloquence, how true and moving its poetry!

Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* appeared in the same year, and Thackeray was one of the first to recognise and welcome the genius of the new author. The public in the main agreed with him, and Miss Brontë's position was at last secured. When a second edition was called for, it was dedicated to Mr Thackeray with words of eloquent appreciation that must have greatly touched him. When the eager brain was stilled, it fell to the pen of Mr Thackeray to repay the debt in one of those tender memorials into which he knew so well how to put all the warmth of his heart. 'I remember' says he in the *Cornhill* article, 'the trembling little frame, the little hand, the great honest eyes; an impetuous honesty seemed to me to characterise the woman. . . . I fancied an austere little Joan of Arc marching in upon us, and rebuking our easy lives, our easy morals. She gave me the impression of being a very pure, and lofty, and high-minded person. A great and holy reverence of right and truth seemed to be with her always. . . . How well I remember

the delight, and wonder, and pleasure with which I read *Jane Eyre*—sent to me by an author whose name and sex were then alike unknown to me; the strange fascinations of the book; and how with my own work pressing upon me, I could not, having taken the volumes up, lay them down until they were read through!'

The descriptions we have of Miss Brontë all refer to her frail and diminutive form, plain in all except the deeply glowing, many-coloured eye. Her manner was painfully shy and self-distrustful, but there might have been seen burning behind it the fearlessness and intensity that go to make up the heroism of great daring or of sublime endurance. Full though the years are to be of swift-coming troubles, they will be met resolutely and with apparent reserves of strength, altogether disproportionate to her seeming weakness.

In December 1848, two months after the death of Branwell, Emily Brontë died, in her thirtieth year. The other two sisters had too plainly foreseen this event, but had not been able to avert it. Emily would see no doctor, take no medicine, and she was one that would not be reasoned with or persuaded. Hers had been an almost silent life, without desire for friends, spent chiefly in the companionship of her own thoughts and the wild moorland around her. Yet was she passionately attached to her home and the dear ones there. In her undoubtedly burned the fire of a great, lonely, perverse, melancholy genius which time and happier circumstances would doubtless have

mellowed for the production of some more enduring works in prose and verse. Her *Wuthering Heights* is a strange, forbidding tale, and no one can read it without wondering how characters and incidents so coarse and repulsive could ever have occurred to a being so retiring and so ignorant of life as she. We have seen how Dr Wright in his *Brontës in Ireland* has plausibly suggested that the knowledge of the seamy side of human character and life revealed in the work of these sisters came to them from their familiarity with the legends concerning the older Brontës, with which he supposes their father's memory to have been stored; but until his theory finds for itself a firmer basis of authentic fact, Emily Brontë must remain the Sphinx of Victorian literature.

The grief of Miss Brontë and her father over Emily's death was greatly aggravated by the oppressive conviction that the seal of death was also upon Anne. She had always been the most delicate, as she had also been the gentlest and most devout member of the family. She died of consumption five months after her sister, in May 1849. Besides her poems, she had published two stories, *Agnes Grey* and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall;* but none of her work has the stamp of high genius so conspicuous in that of her sisters. Through all these melancholy events Charlotte's tale of *Shirley* was slowly shaping itself into form. It was begun before Branwell's death, and was not finished till after the death of Anne. If, therefore, it should be thought less connected, less a unity than *Jane Eyre*,

one can easily understand how disturbing must have been the circumstances that marked its progress. *Shirley* ranks third among the tales of Charlotte Brontë, but excels the others in the open-air effects in which it abounds. Here, as elsewhere, the author errs in following the lines of her own personal observation and experience too closely. All the world of Haworth recognised at once the three curates whom it so graphically describes. They indeed recognised themselves, and used to call each other by the names given them in the book. For this reason it was no longer possible to conceal the authorship of these tales; and henceforth it is not as Currer Bell, but as Charlotte Brontë, the daughter of an obscure Yorkshire clergyman, that the author of *Jane Eyre* is known. In *Shirley* are reproduced the scenes of violence that Miss Wooler used to describe to her school girls; and in Shirley Keeldar herself, Miss Brontë has lovingly striven to embody some of the characteristics of her sister Emily.

A great solitude had now fallen upon the home of the Brontës. Only Charlotte and her father were left, and more and more Mr Brontë was disposed to live a self-inclosed life. This oppressed his daughter, who had a craving for social intercourse, and was therefore in some danger of falling into an unhealthily morbid state of mind. The influence of these feelings is to be traced in Miss Brontë's next work, *Villette*, published in 1853. With her limited opportunities of studying real life, it was perhaps natural that here

also we should find much of her own personal experience and emotion. *Villette* is indeed to a large extent autobiographical, being a record of her life at Brussels, and must be carefully studied in connection with that life, if we are to understand what manner of person the author was. Even so extraordinary an incident as the Protestant heroine's confession to a Roman Catholic priest, is only a record of one of Miss Brontë's actual experiences in Brussels. But apart from this personal interest, *Villette* is a work of great power and undoubted genius. In passionate force and intensity it is almost, if not quite, equal to *Jane Eyre*, and the art is finer. Miss Brontë has learned much since she wrote the work that gave her fame. What more she might have done if the opportunity of longer life had been granted, it is impossible to say. With such force of original genius, and with a growing knowledge and experience of life, there seems no reason why she should not have added to her reputation by works of at least an equal power. But as a matter of fact, *Villette* is the last of her writings, for *The Professor*, published after her death, was her earliest novel.

It now seemed as if after a life of struggle and sorrow, Miss Brontë was going to have her reward in many years of quiet married happiness. Notwithstanding her oddity of appearance, diminutive stature, and great plainness of feature, she must have had the power of making herself attractive to men, for we read of several offers of marriage being made to her. With a

patient constancy and devotion, the Rev. A. B. Nicholls, one of her father's curates, had for eight long years sought her love, and was at length successful in winning it. But Mr Brontë was unaccountably and vehemently opposed. He stormed at Mr Nicholls, would not listen to reason, and ended by compelling him to withdraw from Haworth. Only his daughter's failing health induced him to relent, and even to implore Mr Nicholls to return. The marriage accordingly took place, and all continued to live happily together in the grey old parsonage. It seems to have been for Mrs Nicholls a satisfying life, although it can hardly have appeased her cravings for intellectual sympathy. In any case it was of brief duration. Painfully those two men, to whom this precious life—precious not for its literary achievements, but simply for what it was in itself—was so dear, saw it droop before their eyes. All efforts to avert the impending calamity were of no avail, and nine months after her marriage, on March 31st, 1855, Charlotte Brontë died in her 39th year. She sleeps under the pavement of Haworth church.

Whatever may be thought of Charlotte Brontë's claims to immortality, and there are not wanting attempts to belittle her, English fiction has never been the same since she wrote. The impress of her passionate sincerity is still upon it.

The interest attaching to the life story of the Brontës shows no sign of slackening, and is not likely to be diminished by the recent publication (1896) of

Mr Clement Shorter's *Charlotte Brontë and Her Circle*, a fit pendant to Mrs Gaskell's excellent *Life*. Mr Shorter's book owes much to the facts communicated to him by Mr Nicholls, who still survives after more than forty years.

George Eliot (1819-1880).—In some respects no one could be in greater contrast to Miss Brontë than her great contemporary George Eliot. It is only the accident of time that brings these two women of genius together. They are in reality separated by a whole continent of thought and feeling from each other. And yet, notwithstanding Miss Brontë's manifest limitations of intellect and of knowledge both of the ways of society and of the great problems of thought and destiny, it is she only who can compete with the author of *Adam Bede* for the first place amongst female novelists of the Victorian era. She has less of art than the later writer, but she has more of nature. She wants George Eliot's width, but what she wants in width she gains in depth. She has less intellectual force, but she has far more emotional fervour. She knows little, and cannot conceal how little she knows. George Eliot, on the other hand, is not only one of the most learned of women, but she is also a great artist who has the art of hiding where her knowledge ends. Charlotte Brontë has a force and spontaneity, a directness and sincerity, an imaginative power and a passionate intensity that perhaps as clearly delineate character

within her limited range as even George Eliot's many gifts have done. But it is not necessary thus to contrast these two great writers. Each has her own sphere, and will continue to be read while the heart-beats of the one are heard throbbing along her living and impetuous page, and while the blended wisdom and humour of the other place before us in unsurpassable delineations the peasant and middle-class life of the English Midlands of half a century ago.

Mary Ann Evans, better known in literature as George Eliot, was herself sprung from the class, and was born amidst the scenes she excelled in depicting. This event took place at Arbury Farm, near Nuneaton, Warwickshire, on November 22nd, 1819. Four months later, the family removed to Griff, which thus became the delightful home of George Eliot's childhood and youth during the next twenty-one years of her life. Mr Evans, her father, was a robust, keen-witted, upright-minded man, whose varied capability and well-known integrity of character caused his services to be much in request as land agent among the neighbouring gentry, and his opinion on all questions connected with his business to carry weight through several counties. What manner of man he was is to be seen in the Caleb Garth of *Middlemarch*.

As a little child the future George Eliot was rather slow than otherwise at her lessons. Many years, beginning when she was only five, were spent at boarding schools in the neighbourhood of Nuneaton and Coventry ; and although she was not in the ordinary

sense precocious, the conviction soon sprang up that she was no common child. An eager appetite for books set in. Scott and Elia were especial favourites. *The Pilgrim's Progress*, *The History of the Devil* by Defoe, and Johnson's *Rasselas* were also greatly enjoyed. She easily compassed the tasks set for her at school, and distinguished herself especially by her skill at the piano, and the ability displayed in her English compositions. In view of her after history, perhaps the most striking fact recorded of her is that while a pupil of the Miss Franklins at Coventry, she 'became a leader of prayer meetings amongst the girls.' The strong evangelical cast of her opinions, and the somewhat puritanical tone of her mind, were no doubt largely due to a facility in accommodating her opinions to those of the persons she most loved and revered at the time, which was characteristic of her whole after life. On the other hand, that there was something of nature in it also may be inferred from the fact that to the last, even after the serious divergences of her later career, the gravity of her demeanour, the sobriety of her dress, the thoughtful, not to say sad, expression of her deeply lined and strongly marked countenance, and the increasing earnestness of her calls to a noble and unselfish life, all seemed to suggest the Puritan. No one can read her interesting correspondence with Miss Lewis in the years that followed the close of her school life without being struck with the extent to which religion then dominated her thoughts.

The mood, however, was not healthy, and we are not surprised to learn afterwards that she really was almost crushed under the burden of it. In 1841 she and her father left Griff to reside at Foleshill Road, Coventry. The change was fraught with important consequences in the life of Miss Evans. She was now twenty-one years of age, and at Coventry soon found herself in the midst of a circle of friends, several of whom, such as the Brays and the Hennells, were of superior intelligence, and accustomed both to think and to talk of matters of the deepest concernment. It so happened, moreover, that their religious beliefs did not run on orthodox lines; and it must be confessed that with little apparent struggle on her part, Mary Ann Evans was soon won over to their way of thinking in matters of religion. Her conversion would seem to have been as rapid and thorough as it was final, for George Eliot remained a sceptic to the last. One who knew her well has expressed the opinion that towards the close of the great novelist's life, there were signs of a softening in her mind towards the religious ideas that had been so much to her in her earlier years. This, however, is not supported by the general testimony of her friends. There can be no doubt that at this time her opposition was very real and decided; and it bore fruit in a translation, made with much labour and pains, of Strauss's *Life of Jesus*. This translation yielded her small remuneration, but greatly pleased the author of the book, and called forth very warm com-

mendations from various quarters. This great change in her opinions led to a rupture with her father, to whom it was very displeasing. It is true that the breach was soon healed, but Miss Evans, to whom her father was very dear, never ceased to regret that it had occurred. She remained her father's faithful nurse and companion until his death in 1849; after which, worn out by grief and watching, she accompanied her friends, the Brays, to the Continent, and greatly benefited by a stay of eight months at Geneva.

An important stage of Miss Evans's career was reached in 1851, when she became assistant editor of the *Westminster Review*, and went to live with the Chapmans in the Strand. Here she met a number of clever people, including Mr Herbert Spencer, with whom she remained on the friendliest terms till her death. It was Spencer who brought George Henry Lewes to call upon her. Lewes, who was one of the ugliest of men, and wildly Bohemian in dress and habits, did not at first commend himself to her good opinion. Perhaps his brilliant conversational powers and the versatility of his gifts overcame her repugnance, for the acquaintance speedily ripened into such an intimacy that in 1854 she finally linked her life to his. A stay of several months at Weimar and Berlin followed, during which Lewes was busy with his *Life of Goethe*, and Miss Evans with her articles for the *Westminster Review*.

September 1856 was memorable in her life, for it

was then that she began to write fiction. 'It had always been a vague dream of mine,' she says, 'that I might write a novel;' but she thought herself deficient in dramatic power, both of construction and dialogue. And Mr Lewes, judging no doubt by her clever but heavy work for the *Westminster*, was disposed to confirm her in this opinion, but urged her to try. The result was *Amos Barton*, followed by *Mr Gilfil's Love-Story* and *Janet's Repentance*, all of which appeared under the general title of *Scenes of Clerical Life* in *Blackwood's Magazine*. They were a great success, and notwithstanding their shortcomings, revealed the germs of all George Eliot's great qualities—her humour, her pathos, her freshness of language and ideas, her power in description, and her subtle analysis of character. Greatly encouraged, she at once set herself to the composition of a more important work of the same class. This was *Adam Bede*, the work on which her reputation with the general public still mainly rests. It was begun in October 1857, and like *Scenes of Clerical Life* first saw the light in the pages of *Blackwood*. Its publication undoubtedly marks an era in the history of the novel, and placed its author in the front rank of writers of fiction of any age or country. It is not that the story itself is of supreme excellence. Far more important are the vivid realism and humour with which the writer describes types of middle-class and peasant character in the small towns and villages of the Midlands. The life to which she introduces us is not perhaps a familiar life, but we feel convinc-

ingly how real it all is. We are not in the least surprised to know that many of the scenes and characters were immediately recognised by people living in the localities described. Whatever doubt there might be at first regarding the authorship of the *Scenes of Clerical Life* and *Adam Bede*, there was and could be none as to their local atmosphere and surroundings. Some probability was thus lent to the claim put forth to the authorship of these works in favour of a Mr Liggins of Nuneaton, Warwickshire—a claim very quickly disposed of by the Messrs Blackwood, who indignantly assured the public that no one with a name the least like Liggins had any claim whatever to this honour.

When *The Mill on the Floss* (1860) followed *Adam Bede*, suspicion became certainty, and it was no longer possible to conceal the fact that the author was a lady who had spent her childhood and youth among the scenes and characters she had so vividly described. Hitherto the secret had been well kept. Even her publishers thought that in George Eliot they were dealing with a clergyman. It is all the more creditable, therefore, to the sagacity of Charles Dickens, that he penetrated the disguise, and declared that the new writer was of the gentler sex.

If we add to the three works already mentioned *Silas Marner, the Weaver of Ravelhoe* (1861), a short tale, but one in which the genius of the author may be seen at its best, we shall have named her most characteristic writings; those, that is, in which she sets forth

with such a subtlety of analysis, such an intuitive sympathy, and such a wealth of humour, the common village life of the Midlands sixty years ago. *Romola* (1862-3) unhappily withdrew the author from these familiar scenes and characters. The incidents of the new story are cast amidst the Florentine life of the fifteenth century. The reformer-Monk, Savonarola, in his ill-starred rupture with the Papacy, plays a prominent part in it; and in the grandly moulded Romola herself, and her husband Tito with his pagan exquisiteness of graces and of faults, we have two of the most dramatically conceived figures within the whole range of modern fiction. But with all its fine art and subtle delineation of character, *Romola* was too cumbrous with painfully acquired learning to be generally acceptable. We are not surprised, indeed, when the author confesses that she began it a young woman, and ended it an old one.

Middlemarch (1871-2) returns to the scenes amidst which George Eliot had won her greatest triumphs. It is noticeable, however, that the hand has now lost somewhat of its cunning, and that the results, although many of the scenes and characters are similar, are not quite so satisfactory.

The comparative lightness of touch that had marked the earlier novels is absent from the later ones. The writer's manner becomes more and more academic. A fondness for scientific phraseology and illustration makes her work increasingly heavy from *Romola* onwards. *Felix Holt* (1866) continues the decline, and

when *Daniel Deronda* (1875-6) is reached, there is but little left of the author of *Adam Bede*.

Everyone who had the personal acquaintance of George Eliot noticed how sad she seemed; and the same impression may be gathered from her writings. To the woman, almost middle-aged in years, wholly so in manner and in cast of thought, there had come the great success of the *Scenes of Clerical Life*, and with it there had come an intoxicating revival of the freshness and exhilaration of youth. For what elation of spirit can compare with that which is due to the discovery within ourselves of a hitherto undreamt-of power? Under the influence of this temporary wave of emotion, George Eliot flung off the inimitable delineations of English life and character that are to be found in the Poysers and the Masseys of *Adam Bede;* the Tullivers and the Deanes, the Gleggs and the Pullets of the *Mill on the Floss;* and the immortal company of the Rainbow Tavern in *Silas Marner*. It was not, however, to be wondered at that these recovered fires of youth should quickly spend themselves, and that ere long she should fall back again into the doctrinaire ways of thinking, and the 'ex cathedrâ' manner to which she had already grown habituated.

The heaviness of the moralist and the preacher is over much of her later work. Her humour becomes more and more ponderous; the strain upon the reader's attention more irksome and severe. No one can overlook the profoundly serious purpose of this writer. The artistic desire to give pleasure is

but a small part of it. With the rarest analytical power she probes the depths of the human heart, and lays her hand on the weak places of many a life. But there is none of the bitterness of cynicism in her attitude. She has a great pity for the wrong-doer; still the wrong is wrong, and may not be extenuated. It is therefore with a sense of solemn responsibility that she depicts the inevitable Nemesis that follows upon all human wrong-doing. Nowhere in literature have we a higher ideal of human life. Her voice is strenuous in the call to nobleness and elevation of character and of aim. For the supreme virtue of self-renunciation witnessed in the Teresas of mediæval sainthood, she finds as necessary and commanding a place in the more acute trials and complex situations of modern life. The gloom of the Positivist's creed is unhappily over all her work but this creed she does not obtrude, so that in the prominence which she gives to the doctrine of retribution we might even suppose the Theistic idea to be all-pervading.

Within her home on Cheyne Walk, Chelsea, George Eliot was for many years the centre of a select circle of admiring literary friends. Here in November, 1878, a great blow came to her in the death of Mr George Henry Lewes. This event delayed somewhat the publication of a volume of essays already in the publisher's hands. This volume, under the title of *Impressions of Theophrastus Such*, appeared in 1879, but proved singularly heavy and uninteresting, and added

nothing to the author's reputation. A great surprise was in store for all George Eliot's friends, when, shortly afterwards, she announced her forthcoming marriage with her old and devoted friend John Walter Cross. This event, which took place on the 6th May 1880, the great novelist survived only six months. She had caught a chill in attending a concert, was seized with an affection of the throat, and died suddenly on December 22nd, 1880.

It was perhaps inevitable that so great a writer should desire to express some part of her message in verse. It must be confessed, however, that all of it might have been given with equal power in prose. George Eliot has all the literary gifts but poetry. Learning, rhetoric, dramatic force, majestic thought, and moral intensity are all hers: only the incommunicable something of the inspired singer is absent. Noble passages almost cheat us into the belief that the divine fire is about to burst forth; nevertheless the whole feeling regarding this poetry remains one of disappointment! And what a dark cloud of sorrow rests over it! Even admiration for the high lessons of self-abnegation and moral restraint to which it summons, cannot make us forget the pain of its gloom and joylessness.

Her first and longest work in verse, *The Spanish Gypsy* (1864), coming from a writer so distinguished, was undoubtedly a disappointment. Nor can it be said that her subsequent poems, *The Legend of Jubal*, *Brother and Sister*, and *How Lisa Loved the King*

(1869), altered the popular verdict, although they showed a growing sweetness and mastery over metrical forms. The most generally acceptable, and also the most poetical of all her poems is that beginning,

'O may I join the choir invisible,'

a poem which might almost be mistaken for a sublime expression of Christian aspiration, did we not know that it is rather the cry of a heart that sees no other immortality for the dead than that which is found in minds made better by their presence :—

'O may I join the choir invisible
Of those immortal dead who live again
In minds made better by their presence : live
In pulses stirred to generosity,
In deeds of daring rectitude, in scorn
For miserable aims that end with self,
In thoughts sublime that pierce the night like stars,
And with their mild persistence urge man's search
To vaster issues.
So to live is heaven :
To make undying music in the world,
Breathing as beauteous order that controls
With growing sway the growing life of man.
. . . . . .
This is life to come,
Which martyred men have made more glorious
For us who strive to follow. May I reach
That purest heaven, be to other souls
The cup of strength in some great agony,
Enkindle generous ardour, feed pure love,
Beget the smiles that have no cruelty—
Be the sweet presence of a good diffused,
And in diffusion ever more intense.
So shall I join the choir invisible
Whose music is the gladness of the world.'

Edward Bulwer, Lord Lytton (1805-1873).—Let the position of a writer be determined by versatility, industry, productiveness, and general literary resource, and no one will be entitled to rank higher than Edward Bulwer Lytton. He aspired to fill many rôles, and the wonder is that in attempting so many things, he should so nearly have achieved success in all. As novelist, poet, philosopher, satirist, historian, essayist, orator, and statesman, he displays an unwearying energy during the fifty years over which his literary activity extends. Notwithstanding a somewhat feeble constitution and a social position which might well have justified a life of ease, no son of the soil ever worked more unremittingly than he. The result is to be seen in the two hundred volumes he has added to English literature.

Yet Lytton cannot rank with the greatest masters of fiction in our era. Few will refuse him the honour of being its greatest literary artist, but the credit of genius has been generally denied him. His imagination was not of the highest order, and cannot point to any great gallery of original creations. His fancy had no Ariel-like qualities—swift, immediate, unerring. Moreover, his works lack the freshness and naturalness that are so distinct a note of genius. No compelling power in the writer forces him to utter *himself*. Everything is calculated and done by labour. However brilliant his effects may be, it is not difficult to trace the mechanic means by which they have

been reached. The art of this great writer, in fact, too much resembles that of the stage manager, and the tinsel and glare of the footlights are too frequently in evidence. Always master of his subject, his subject never seems to master him. His various works are so many costumes he elects to wear, not a succession of inevitable and unconscious self-unfoldings. He is fond of posing as a scholar and philosopher, but his actual attainments are by no means so extensive as they are made to appear. On the other hand, no man living could make what knowledge he had go so far.

Bulwer Lytton's earliest writings were in verse, and throughout his life he appears to have cherished the ambition of winning distinction as a poet. In this, however, he was disappointed. His first work, *Ismael and other Poems*, was published in 1820 when he was fifteen years of age. In 1825 came *Sculpture*, a poem for which he obtained the Chancellor's medal at Cambridge. Another volume of verse, entitled *Weeds and Wild Flowers*, followed in 1826. To his more mature period belongs a long epic on the subject of King Arthur, from which he seems to have expected much ; but it, too, proved a failure. There is an irony of fortune in the circumstance that what was thus denied to him was given, at least more bountifully, to his son, who, both under the assumed name of Owen Meredith and his own title as the Earl of Lytton, won considerable distinction in the field of poetry.

Bulwer Lytton was still a youth of twenty-one when in 1827 he began his much greater career as a novelist

by the publication of *Falkland*. *Pelham* followed in the same year. These works had all the faults of extreme youth—vanity, self-consciousness, and an over-luxuriance of language and of Byronic passion. *Pelham* especially, however, took with the public, who had discernment enough to overlook its juvenile shortcomings, and to see in its brilliant sketches of contemporary manners the signs of coming greatness. His next works, *The Disowned* (1828) and *Devereux* (1829), show a growing power and command of literary resource. In *Paul Clifford* (1831) and *Eugene Aram* (1833) the feeling grows on the reader, that however brilliant and fascinating his pictures of English life in the earlier half of the nineteenth century may be, on the moral side Lytton's work is scarcely to be commended. The fops and profligates, the highwaymen and murderers of these earlier novels are not an edifying spectacle. Moreover, the writer presents them in such a setting of attractive qualities that the attention of the reader is apt to be withdrawn from their vicious and criminal enormities, and some measure even of sympathy to be evoked on their behalf.

A healthier moral tone and also a higher literary art belong to the group of historical novels which now came from Lytton's pen. A prolonged residence abroad produced *The Pilgrims of the Rhine* in 1833, and that was followed by *The Last Days of Pompeii* in 1834, and *Rienzi* in 1835. These two fine tales are not without the faults that attach in general to the historical novel, but they are particularly happy

in setting before us with great spirit and vividness the life of classic and mediæval Rome. Moreover, the glamour of romance which the writer contrived to throw around the fateful circumstances of the doomed Italian city, and the heroic efforts of the last of the Tribunes was not purchased at the expense of truthfulness of local or archæological detail. At a later period he returned to this form of fiction in *The Last of the Barons* (1843), and *Harold* (1850), both happily devoted to characters and periods of our native history.

But the high-water mark of Bulwer Lytton's art is reached in his three novels of English Life, *The Caxtons* (1848), *My Novel* (1853), and *What will He do with it* (1858), *My Novel* being generally reckoned the finest and most complete work from his pen. Other works reflect the interest he took in occult study, but these, while not without passages of great brilliance and beauty, do not attract the ordinary reader as did the series of domestic tales just referred to. The best specimens of this class of story, in which the mystical plays so prominent a part, are *Zanoni* (1842), and *A Strange Story* (1862). But besides these various tales there were many others, of which mention need only be made here of *Godolphin*, *Ernest Maltravers*, *Alice, or the Mysteries*, and *Night and Morning*.

In the drama Lytton achieved a splendid success. After some preliminary failures he produced three great plays—*The Lady of Lyons*, *Richelieu*, and *Money*, which added largely to his reputation at the time, and

have held the stage ever since. But the spurious sentiment, the inflated language, and the over-laboured situations of these pieces have begun to pall upon the public taste, although in view of certain unhealthy developments in the modern drama, we might well wish for them a longer life.

Lytton also had brilliant qualities as an essayist, although his work in this department is not so well known as it deserves to be. As editor he wrote many articles for the new *Monthly Magazine*, some of which were afterwards published in the *Student*, and gave admirable proof of his sparkling style, his knowledge of the world, and many other accomplishments. At a later period he contributed a series of essays on Life, Literature, and Manners to *Blackwood's Magazine*, and these also were afterwards republished under the title of *Caxtoniana*.

His satires, *The Siamese Twins* and *The New Timon*, were not so successful. In the latter he made his famous attack upon Tennyson, which produced a notable and scathing rejoinder from the pen of the poet. It is pleasant to know that the feud was not permanent, and that probably through the urbanity and sweetness of Lytton's nature, which especially disposed him to be on friendly terms with all brother writers, these two famous men soon became friends, and remained so throughout the rest of their career.

In giving a sketch of the varied literary industry of this great writer, it is necessary to allude, however

briefly, to works in other departments of literature. Of these are *England and the English* (1833), his excellent but incomplete *Athens, its Rise and Fall* (1836), a translation of the *Poems and Ballads of Schiller* (1844), which so good a judge as Carlyle declared to be the very best form in which the English reader could become acquainted with the German poet, and *The Lost Tales of Miletus* (1866).

His career as a statesman does not concern us here. It is enough to say that he brought to his parliamentary duties the same high ambition and the same unwearied diligence that he gave to his literary labours, and that in the political arena he had the respect of all parties, who regarded his elaborate speeches as brilliant and admirable contributions towards the settlement of the great questions then at issue. His political zeal was in 1866 rewarded with a peerage.

Considering Lord Lytton as a whole, we find in him many qualities to justify the high estimation in which he was held by his contemporaries—his versatility, his wide range of information, his brilliant intellect, his ambition in everything to achieve the highest possible distinction, his unwearying diligence, his suave and kindly courtliness of manner, his interest in, and zeal for, all things literary. His life is a true unity, and as it nears its close, it is not the parliamentary orator that holds our attention, but the literary artist. What he was at the beginning he is still after fifty years of labour. The busy brain knows no slackening. In 1871 he had published an interest-

ing romance entitled *The Coming Race*, in which, under the name of 'vril,' the future triumphs of electricity seemed to be outlined. In January 1873, while another story, *The Parisians*, was still running its course in *Blackwood's Magazine*, he had gone down to Torquay to recruit, taking with him for revise the proof sheets of his last novel, just finished, *Kenelm Chillingly*. An affection of the ear, from which he had long suffered, became worse. Inflammation set in, and on the 18th he died, being then in the sixty-sixth year of his age.

Lytton was the third son of General Bulwer of Heydon Hall, Norfolk. His mother was the last descendant of the ancient Lyttons of Knebworth in Hertfordshire. During the first half of his life the great novelist is known as Lytton-Bulwer, but having on the death of his mother succeeded to her extensive properties under the condition of taking the maternal name, he is henceforth known as Bulwer-Lytton. He himself was married to Miss Wheeler, an Irish lady, but the marriage proved unhappy.

Benjamin Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield (1804-1881), presents to the imagination a picturesquely interesting and brilliant career. He was of Jewish descent, being the son of Isaac D'Israeli, the well-known author of *The Curiosities of Literature*, and *The Calamities of Authors*. From his father and grandfather, the future Earl of Beaconsfield doubtless inherited his cultivated literary tastes, besides such qualities of race as an

oriental richness of imagination and luxuriance of language. He had none of the advantages that are supposed to attach to a public school and university education. He was privately educated, and afterwards articled to an attorney. Thrown thus early upon his own resources, he may be said to have educated himself, and to have developed a courageous self-reliance and an intellectual vigour considerably beyond his years.

It is difficult to write anything of this great man without taking into account the picturesque incidents of his distinguished political career. From the first his supreme ambition was to be the Prime Minister of England, and it is as the parliamentary orator and statesman working steadily towards this goal that he is especially to be noted. It is not difficult, however, to see that his great ambition colours even his brilliant stories of fashionable society and political life. As literature, pure and simple, these can scarcely be taken quite seriously, however interesting they may be as episodes in the life-history of a great statesman. Disraeli and Bulwer-Lytton were contemporaries, and in 1827, while the latter was making his appeal to the public with *Falkland*, the former was presenting *Vivian Grey*. There followed from Disraeli's pen *The Young Duke* (1831), *Contarini Fleming* (1832), and *Alroy* (1833), besides some even more powerful work in satire, such as *Ixion in Heaven* (1833).

In 1837 Mr Disraeli took his seat for the first time in the House of Commons, and in the same year

produced *Henrietta Temple* and *Venetia*. In 1844 he made an advance in *Coningsby*, and in 1845 in *Sybil*, both of them political novels of a pronounced type. After *Tancred, or the New Crusade* (1847), the toils of parliamentary life monopolise almost all his attention; and it is not therefore till 1871 that he reappears as a writer of fiction in *Lothair*. A period of ten years more sees the production of *Endymion* (1881), the last work of the kind from Disraeli's pen.

An exotic quality is observable in all these writings. Allowance has to be made for the fact that the writer is a man of alien race. Throughout, the colours are too strong and the language is too highly pitched for sober English literature. Sometimes he writes with a simple grace: more frequently he lapses into tawdriness and bad taste. It is impossible not to be struck with the extreme cleverness of the writer; yet his exaggeration, his excess of language, and his audacity of statement produce results that are sometimes no less than ludicrous in their absurdity. On no subject is he more prone to give the reins to his imagination than that of the intellectual and artistic superiority of the Jewish race, as in *Coningsby*, his finest story. Very much of the interest awakened by these novels when first published was due to the fact that they were filled with personalities, and made very free with numerous well-known real personages in social, political, and literary life. For us of a later time much of their interest is due, not so much to any qualities of genius they may possess, as to the

undisguised egotism of the writer, which enables us to compare the earlier with the later character and opinions of one of the most picturesque and interesting personalities in the whole range of English statesmanship.

Charles Lever (1806-1872) belongs to the same period of the Victorian novel, and he, too, suffers from contrast with more distinguished contemporaries. The entertainment he furnished lacked nothing on the score of liveliness. In that particular there is a striking correspondence between his earlier writings and what we know of his own youthful character and tastes. We find in them the same lightheartedness, the same invincible gaiety, the same boisterous, sometimes outrageous, merriment, the same high pressure of unflagging energy. There are many tales to tell of his boyhood that are more eloquent of his rollicking fun and faculty for getting into mischief than of his diligence in study.

Charles Lever was born in Dublin in 1806, and received a medical education, first at Trinity College of that city, and then at Göttingen. Having returned to Dublin and duly qualified, he practised for a time in the north of Ireland, but apparently with no great success. It was in these circumstances that he produced his first work, *The Confessions of Harry Lorrequer* (1839). It was followed in the same vein by *Charles O'Malley* (1841), *Jack Hinton* (1842), *Tom Burke* (1844), and *The O'Donoghue* (1845). The

chief subject of these tales is the same, the irrepressible humours, and the daring recklessness of military life and character. Deep drinkings and much swearing, breakneck coursings across country regardless of impediments, duels, practical jocularities, an abundance of wit and humour, and the liveliest of dialogue, make up the substance of these merry tales. Much is, of course, preposterous, but much was forgiven at the time for the sake of the exuberant animal spirits with which they were written.

For several years Lever served as physician to the Legation at Brussels, and very much of his later life was spent in the discharge of Consular duties on the shores of the Mediterranean and the Adriatic. His Continental experiences, therefore, are now found mingling with, and greatly sobering the native fun of his earlier tales. *The Knight of Gwynne*, *Arthur O'Leary*, *Con Cregan*, and *Roland Cashel*, in his earlier manner, were thus followed by the *Dodd Family Abroad*, *The Daltons*, and others, in which this cosmopolitan element is distinctly evident. His latest novel, *Lord Kilgobbin*, published in the year of his death, if it has not the extraordinary vivacity of his earlier years, shows but little sign of wear and tear. Up to the last, too, he was maintaining in the pages of *Blackwood's Magazine*, by his *Cornelius O'Dowd* papers, his reputation as a brilliant essayist. He died at Trieste in 1872.

Anthony Trollope (1815-1882) resembles Lord

Lytton both in his habits of industry applied to literature, and also in the great number of works that proceeded from his pen. But there the resemblance ends. He had none of the brilliant qualities of the older writer.

His stories, however, are healthier in tone. They present agreeable types of character, and are especially noteworthy for their clever and attractive sketches of English clerical life as found in the genteel atmosphere of country parsonages and cathedral towns. When dealing with such material, Trollope is singularly felicitous and free from exaggeration. The conviction that the picture is true to fact and to nature is irresistible. But this is not a brilliant or lively society, and the very faithfulness with which he sets it before us may be the reason why his pages are occasionally dull. The realism of his manner—plain unsensational, uninspired—may to some extent be regarded as one of Trollope's strong points, but it unquestionably detracts not a little from the interest of his works. Few writers have furnished safer and healthier entertainment to the class of readers who desire to take their fiction innocently and quietly. The emotional and intellectual demands which he makes upon them are of the mildest description. Concerning much of his work, it may be said that his is a flowery path of fiction that lies through no tangled thickets of troubled thought and complicated experience, but through open sunlit tracks where simple folk may loiter and walk at ease. It has

its uses, stale though it may seem to the neurotic novel reader of to-day.

Trollope himself foresaw that probably only a few of his eighty stories would be remembered. He wrote too much, and was in some danger of lowering the standard of literary composition by an undeviating and mechanical routine. His reputation has undoubtedly suffered from this cause. It is difficult for people to understand that work done as Trollope did his can bear the stamp of sterling quality. But this bluff, plain-featured, unromantic, fox-hunting author cared little for the divine afflatus. 'I was once told,' he says, 'that the surest aid to the writing of a book was a piece of cobbler's wax on my chair. I certainly believe in the cobbler's wax much more than the inspiration.' On this principle he allotted himself so many pages a week—on an average 40—each page containing 250 words. In making his bargains with his publishers he would arrange in his own mind how many words he would give them, and he prides himself that never once did he come short of the number, or fail to complete the work within the stipulated time. One wonders that Trollope, having such a method of work, should so frankly confess it; and further, that in such circumstances any of his writings should have reached so high a level, as, for example, the Barsetshire series did. *The Warden*, with which the series opened in 1855, was followed at intervals by *Barchester Towers*, *Doctor Thorne*, *Framley Parsonage*, and *The Last Chronicle*

of Barset. The last two were the best. Trollope himself thought *The Last Chronicle of Barset* the finest thing he had ever done, and in his judgment most readers will coincide. Not unworthy, however, of being classed with the best of these are *The Three Clerks*, *Orley Farm*, *The Small House of Allington*, and *Phineas Finn.*

But Trollope's literary industry was not confined to fiction. He had travelled in almost every part of the globe, and embodied his impressions in such works as *The West Indies and the Spanish Main*, *Australia and New Zealand*, *North America*, and *South Africa*, which were all extensively read and highly popular when they first appeared. He is responsible also for lives of Cæsar, Cicero, Thackeray, and Lord Palmerston.

Not inferior in interest to the most interesting of these works is the *Autobiography* of Trollope, published after his death. It shows us a career in which the ludicrous curiously blends with the pathetic. His father was an English barrister, highly educated and richly endowed, having, as it seemed, the ball of his profession at his foot. Yet everything goes wrong with him, and he becomes rapidly impecunious. Yet was he an able and upright, a good-living and industrious man, afflicted, however, with an incurable infirmity of temper. Young Anthony attended Harrow School, in the near neighbourhood of their home, but for some unexplained reason, though there may have been in himself a certain awkwardness which aroused

prejudice, he seems to have had nothing but cuffs at the hands of his teachers and schoolmates. For twelve years he remained at school, chiefly Harrow and Winchester, during which time he believes he had been more flogged than any human being alive. At neither of them had he any friends. And yet quite pitifully he assures us how intense at that time was his desire to be loved, and how much he longed to participate in the games from which the contempt or dislike of his companions excluded him. Nor were matters greatly improved when he left school, and entered upon the duties of a clerkship in the London Post Office. His chiefs never liked him, and during his seven years' service at St Martin's he was constantly, as he felt, on the eve of dismissal. Yet talent of some kind he must have had, and must have shown. His miserable London life was probably less due to official snubs and the debts he had begun to contract, than to the fact that he was so entirely shut off from appreciative friendships. There were dormant powers and ambitions in him that only waited the kindly encouragement of a true friend to make themselves felt. In truth, however, he was at this time singularly deficient in very elementary accomplishments. From all his twelve years of schooling, he had got nothing except a smattering of Latin and Greek. At nineteen years of age he spelt badly, had never, as he says, learned the multiplication table or worked a sum in long division, and was deficient even in writing. The circumstance

that perhaps most strikes the reader is the curious contrast between Trollope's characteristics in this earlier period and what he afterwards became. The painfully methodical scribe of the novels, getting up at 5.30 every morning, doing regularly his tale of words per day, who is never once behindhand with any piece of work he undertakes, and never except on one solitary occasion—for which, moreover, he was not responsible—began to publish a book before it was finished, was at school and during these earlier years of official life the despair of his superiors for his incorrigibly careless, untidy, and unpunctual habits.

In 1841 he went to Ireland on important postal business of his own choosing. This was undoubtedly the making of him. The really good qualities of his work now won the approval of more appreciative chiefs, and his excellent private qualities brought him the warm esteem of many friends in the sister island. His financial position was greatly improved; his life, he declares, was now as happy as before it had been miserable; and, to crown all, it was here he found his excellent wife, then on a visit to Ireland. No sketch of Trollope would be complete without a reference to his fondness for hunting. He tells us that he never quite enjoyed writing a book if it did not allow of a hunting chapter. The truth is that with himself, field sports amounted to a passion, and somehow he contrived, without causing his postal or his literary work to suffer, to have his two or three days every week with the hounds for nearly thirty

years of his life. And yet he assures us he was never a good horseman, was moreover of very heavy build, and so blind that he could never tell which way the fox had gone, or see the fence or the ditch before him. On many occasions he had occupied a cold perch on the outside of the stage-coach all night in order to be in time for the meet in the morning, and after a hot cross-country ride he would return as he had come, to be ready for official duty the following day. His life in Ireland gave abundant opportunities for the gratification of this passion, but he did not abandon it on his return to England in 1859.

The year 1847, that saw the completion of *Vanity Fair* and the publication of *Jane Eyre*, witnessed also Trollope's first unfortunate attempt at authorship. This was *The Macdermots of Balycloran*, followed in 1848 by *The Kellys and the O'Kellys*. Both were received with chill indifference, but he was not discouraged. After a further and equally unsuccessful effort, he produced *The Warden*, and the tide began to turn. Although he had had but few opportunities of knowing clergymen in actual life, and his pictures must therefore be regarded as showing his conception of what they ought to be, rather than his knowledge of what they were, his bishops, deans, archdeacons, and curates were universally recognised to be remarkably true and vivid. After this he had no more difficulty, and life flowed on smoothly and successfully with him to its close. He died of paralysis on the 6th of December 1882.

Few families, if any, have such a record of literary work to show. Trollope's father had for many years before his death been engaged upon an *Encyclopedia Ecclesiastica*, or history of religious orders and communities. Before that event his mother had gone to America for the purpose of establishing her son Henry in business. She brought back with her, completed, a book which she had written on *The Domestic Manners of the Americans*. This was shortly afterwards published, and proved a great success. She was now fifty years of age, and had never published a line before. Henceforth she became the bread-winner of the family, and produced 114 volumes, chiefly books of travel and novels, in the next twenty years of her life. All the cares of the household were hers. While she was doing some of her best work, she was both day and night nurse at one time to a dying husband and two dying children. There was the more need for the busy pen to bestir itself, and every morning at four she began her literary labours. From all which, no less than from what her son has told us, we conclude that she was a woman of ability and force of character, of a generous, pleasure-loving, and affectionate nature, and no little brightness and charm. She died in 1863. *The Vicar of Wrexhill* and *The Widow Barnaby* are good examples of her satirical humour.

The eldest son of the family, Thomas Adolphus Trollope, who early settled in Italy, also became a writer of books, chiefly on Italian subjects, although he too wrote novels. A daughter also, who married

Mr Tilley, one of Anthony's oldest and most intimate friends, and who died comparatively young, left in manuscript a tale called *Chollerton*, which was afterwards published.

Charles Reade (1814-1884) is no sayer of smooth things. He has rather the prophet's plainness and energy of denunciation. A novelist with a mission, his aim is not to give quiet enjoyment to easy-minded readers, but rather to awaken them by the inexorable logic of facts to certain questions of urgent social and political importance. Thus *It is Never too Late to Mend* (1857) concerns itself with the ethics of prison discipline and penal settlements; *Hard Cash* (1863) is an arraignment of the private lunatic asylum; and *Put Yourself in his Place* (1870) illustrates the cruelty and tyranny of the modern Trades' Union. The facts as to all these subjects are gathered with laborious care, are marshalled with great skill, and often possess a harrowing interest. In his manner Reade is distinctly sensational, and both his aim and his subjects lend themselves well to the strong colours, nervous energy, and melodramatic vividness of his style. Given the propriety of the motive, it is not easy to conceive that any writer could have handled with more effect the sometimes unpleasant materials he has put into these tales. Probably Reade himself was more desirous to be considered a preacher of righteousness to his generation than a supreme artist. And it must be confessed that much of his work is poor, inartistic,

and even vulgar in quality. Of his better writings, in addition to those already named, may be mentioned *Peg Woffington* (1852), *Christie Johnstone* (1853), and *Griffith Gaunt* (1866). *The Cloister and the Hearth* (1861), however, is universally admitted to be Reade's masterpiece, and well deserves to be ranked among the best historical novels of the century. There are many who go further, and maintain that it is the finest single fiction of the Victorian era. It is a tale of the fifteenth century, and brings before the reader with startling vividness the cruelty and sordidness, the heroisms and the consecrations of life in the deep darkness that preceded the dawn of the Reformation in Europe. The knowledge displayed is immense. There are humour and pathos in abundance. The canvas is crowded with all kinds of figures—beggar and thief, adventurer and peasant, priest and noble, grouped with admirable effect, and taking part in a series of intensely dramatic scenes and adventures. The whole tale moves at a singular elevation, and conveys a sense of unwonted power. As to its main part, the story is of the rare constancy and pure affection of two sorely-tried hearts sent to an early grave by a combination of fateful circumstances such as could only have arisen in these far-off times.

Essentially Reade is a teller of stories. His method is to evolve character by simple narrative, and he denounces somewhat arrogantly as 'the easy expedient of feeble art,' the false method, as he calls it, of the analytical school of fiction writers who 'clog the story

with a hundred little essays on the character of each character.' Without stopping to consider how far he was right in this, it is sufficient to note what was Reade's own method and conception of his art.

Charles Reade was the son of an Oxfordshire squire, and was born at Ipsden in 1814. He distinguished himself in his studies at Oxford, and was elected Fellow of Magdalen College. In 1842 he was called to the bar, which, however, he soon abandoned for literature. His earliest literary efforts took the form of plays, several of which he wrote in conjunction with Mr Tom Taylor, their best known drama being *Masks and Faces*. Reade died in 1884, leaving a character which it is somewhat difficult to estimate accurately, from the combination in it of much moral earnestness, great intellectual force, and an undoubted genius, with an irritating crotchetiness and eccentricity.

Mrs Gaskell (1810-1865) through all the toils and excitements of successful authorship remained a true woman in the sweetest and worthiest meaning of the name. In all the ordinary relations of life she was admirable, neglecting no social or domestic duty, shrinking from every attempt to lionise her, and charming no less by her personal attractions and the grace of her manner than by the sweetness of her disposition. All the more, therefore, is it to be regretted that she should have left an injunction that no biography of her was to be written. There

would have been a genuine pleasure in following the details of a life of such varied and generous usefulness.

Mrs Gaskell, whose maiden name was Elizabeth Cleghorn Stevenson, was born at Chelsea in the year 1810. She was early bereft of her mother, and was then transferred to the care of an aunt, whose home was in Knutsford, Cheshire. It is this quaint, provincial town, with its no less quaint society, that Mrs Gaskell has immortalised under the name of Cranford. She went to school in Warwickshire, a county the interesting scenery and associations of which appear to have deeply impressed her memory. After an uneventful youth, she was married in 1832 to the Rev. William Gaskell, a Unitarian minister of kindred sympathies with her own, and settled in Manchester. To this day the great cotton capital bears the impress of Mrs Gaskell's genius and philanthropy. Her position as a minister's wife gave her many opportunities of becoming intimately acquainted with the hardships in the lot of the Manchester mill hands. There had come certain years of terrible distress, in which many of the mills were stopped, and in which, therefore, the sufferings of the poor factory workers were extreme. Bad blood was engendered between capital and labour, and perhaps it is not surprising that her warmth of heart and readiness of sympathy should enlist themselves chiefly on the side of those who suffered most. It seemed to her a bewildering, almost incredible thing, as it also seemed to the starving operatives, that while they were plunged in such unspeakable

misery, their masters should be so little affected by the general distress as to be able to live as before in the enjoyment of every comfort and accustomed luxury. And here we find the keynote of Mrs Gaskell's literary career. Her heart, hot within her in its painful sympathy with a maddening trouble she could do so little to relieve, drove her to her pen, if, perchance, she might heal the breach between employers and employed. It is the best monument of this great author in the city in which she spent her life, that her efforts were not altogether fruitless, and that the state of things she has described with such thrilling effect is never likely to be repeated.

Mrs Gaskell's first contribution to literature would seem to have been a sketch dealing with the condition of the poor, which appeared in *Blackwood's Magazine* in 1837. In 1847 and 1848, under the pseudonym of 'Cotton Mather Mills, Esq.,' she wrote several tales descriptive of the same forms of life for *Howitt's Journal*. But it was with *Mary Barton*, published in 1848, that she first became known as a writer. Into this work she flung her whole soul. The utter abandonment to despair of the starving thousands of Manchester, and the dangerous unrest and bitter class hatreds engendered by it, were described with a realistic force and a passionate earnestness that could not be excelled. The book appeared at the right moment. Society was already deeply exercised concerning the strained relations between employers and employed, and anxious to find a remedy. To this no doubt some

part of the remarkable success of *Mary Barton* was due. But besides, there were qualities of genius in it sufficient to give the writer a place among the foremost novelists of the century. Something, no doubt, of special pleading is traceable in *Mary Barton*. With all her intention to be strictly fair, and hold the balance even between class and class, she does seem to state the case with too much warmth for the operative, and does not, perhaps, sufficiently allow for the difficulties of the employer.

Mary Barton was followed by *The Moorland Cottage* (1850), and *Ruth* (1853), a powerful story upon a painful subject. In *Cranford* (1853) Mrs Gaskell passed into a more serene atmosphere, in which, describing under this name the Knutsford of her early acquaintance, she lovingly sets forth the genteel poverty, the innocent self-respecting pride, the quaint humours, and the gentle charities of a society of elderly spinsters and widows without children. Nothing could be done more simply, exquisitely, or with a higher air of truth. To have read *Cranford* is to have personally known the sleepy old place, to have come for ever under the power of its charm, to have taken part in its innumerable tea-drinkings and games of Preference, to have trembled at the uncanny feats of Signor Brunoni, and to have fallen irrecoverably in love with dear, old, pathetic Miss Matty.

North and South (1855), a return in some degree to her earlier and less genial subjects, was followed by

Sylvia's Lovers (1863), *Cousin Phillis* (1864), and *Wives and Daughters* (1865); and in all of these Mrs Gaskell was steadily advancing into a higher art, a more refined humour, and a riper wisdom. How delicately, yet how firmly, are the characters drawn, and what a wholesome society it is to which she introduces us! Few readers can be indifferent to the idyllic charm of those tales in their sweet setting of summer cornfields and glowing orchards, of blazing June gardens and cool, fresh meadows, of picturesque manor house and quaint provincial town. They leave a scent of roses in the memory, and we wonder less that Mrs Gaskell should be the favourite novelist of certain critical readers than that she should be comparatively unknown to so many. *Wives and Daughters*, the last, and one of the best, of her works, was appearing in the pages of the *Cornhill*, and wanted only one chapter to complete it, when the author was struck down quite suddenly in the apparent enjoyment of good health, full of happy plans for work in the future, and strong in the consciousness of a power that was only now coming to its full maturity. She died at her country house in Hampshire towards the close of 1865, and was buried in the churchyard of the Unitarian Chapel of Knutsford, the quaint Cranford of her story.

Charles Kingsley (1819-1875), the son of the Rev. Charles Kingsley, Rector of Chelsea, was born at Holne, Dartmoor, Devonshire, in 1819. He was a

delicate, nervous, precocious child, inheriting valuable qualities from both his richly-endowed parents. Through his father's presentation to the Rectory of Barnack, and afterwards to that of Clovelly, the boy had early opportunity of imbibing the paternal love of sport and outdoor life, and of becoming acquainted with at least two types of English scenery, both of which he afterwards excelled in describing—the vast expanses and marvellous sunset and cloud effects of the Fens, and the rocky shores of North Devon fretted by the Atlantic wave. The child was born with a poet's love of nature. To physical science, especially botany and geology, his earliest enthusiasms were given. It may be truly said in his case that the child was father of the man. When in 1831 he went to a preparatory school at Clifton, he had some lurid glimpses of the famous Bristol riots of that year, an experience which he was afterwards wont to speak of as his first lesson in social science. From Clifton he passed to Helston School, then under the head-mastership of the Rev. Derwent Coleridge, the son of Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Here we obtain a distinct view of him as he was at this period, bright and clever, but shy and nervous, his sensitiveness being rendered more acutely painful by a hesitation in his speech, which he never altogether overcame. Although not expert at games, he was remarkable for feats of agility and the love of adventure. The passion for nature had grown in him. Brave and generous, tender-hearted and courteous, high-spirited and keenly

sensitive to ridicule, he impressed his teachers favourably, but was too manifestly superior in many ways to be quite popular with the other boys. In 1836 his father became Rector of Chelsea, a change which, with Kingsley's passion for the country, was anything but agreeable to him. Two years of study at King's College, London, followed, after which he entered at Magdalene College, Cambridge, where in 1842 he took his Bachelor's degree, obtaining a first class in Classics, and coming out as Senior Optime in Mathematics. In this year also he received Deacon's orders, and entered upon the curacy of Eversley, where he was destined to labour for the remaining thirty-three years of his life. Not as curate, however, for in the following year he was presented to the Rectory of this parish, and was duly married to the excellent lady to whom he had been engaged for some time, and from whose fine life of her husband these facts are chiefly taken. Nothing could exceed the earnestness and sense of consecration with which he now entered upon the duties of his sacred office; but Charles Kingsley was the same true priest to the last. For however diverse might be the lines along which his boundless energy spent itself, he never forgot that he was first and above all a minister of the Cross, responsible for this cure of souls. Times came when evil things were said of him elsewhere, for few writers have had more controversies on hand, or have called forth more bitter opposition; but no echoes of them were heard in the parish of Eversley, where for all

these more than thirty years he was so abundantly loved and revered.

The poetic temperament shines through all the character and life-work of Kingsley. It was natural, therefore, that his earliest efforts in literature should take the form of verse. In those early days of his life at Eversley he was in the habit of refreshing himself with the composition of an occasional song or ballad, some of them, such as 'The Sands o' Dee' and the 'Three Fishers,' showing a genuine lyrical gift, or with his most ambitious work in poetry, *The Saint's Tragedy*, published in 1846.

The same causes that produced the *Mary Barton* of Mrs Gaskell produced also *Yeast* (1848) and *Alton Locke* (1850), the earliest novels from the pen of Mr Kingsley. England was then in a state of social and political ferment. Nothing was spoken of but 'The People's Charter.' Mr Kingsley was of those who thought that all the miseries of the poor were traceable to bad government and the evil adjustments of society. Not only, therefore, did he passionately support in political tracts, and in his earlier fictions, the demands of the Charter, he even conveyed the impression that in his opinion these demands did not go far enough. Such being the case, there were many who thought of him as a dangerous person. At a time when revolution seemed to be in the air, his harangues to the people, under the signature of Parson Lot, were resented by the party of order as highly inflammatory. In truth, Kingsley was of those

who never can do things by halves, who do not know how to mince their words, and who seem to find it impossible to see either reason or justice on a side different from that which they themselves have espoused. Both the strength and the weakness of Kingsley, therefore, here come distinctly into view; his brave, unselfish, generous humanity, and not less, his one-sidedness, his controversial violence, his want of mental balance, and his defect of sound logic. He always meant to be fair, but his impulsive energy, his vivid imagination, his over-confidence in his opinions carried him too far.

As a novelist Kingsley reached his maturity in *Hypatia* (1853) and *Westward Ho!* (1855), both of them fairly entitled to rank with the best historical romances of the Victorian era. *Two Years Ago* (1857), and *Hereward, the Last of the English* (1866), with all their merits, are of less permanent value. *Hypatia* is a work of extraordinary brilliance and power. It attempts the almost superhuman task of reproducing for the nineteenth century the Alexandria of the fifth. The deadly clash of opposing systems of thought—Pagan, Neo-Platonic, and Christian—is heard in its pages, as also is the struggle of races and civilisations so different as the Græco-Latin, Jewish, and Teutonic. Glimpses into the deep weltering pool of heathen corruption are obtained, and the reader shudders under a sense of the unimaginable misery and pollution of the ancient world. Kingsley is nowhere perfect, and *Hypatia* has

its extravagances and inconsistencies, is not free from bombast and sensationalism, and savours not a little of the modern preacher and controversialist. But at what an elevation of sustained energy and enthusiasm it moves! How vividly its pictures impress the imagination! Whether in the sandy solitude of the Thebaid, with its lonely spiritual heroisms, or in the busy Egyptian port, with its fierce hatreds and cruel fanaticisms, scenes, people, incidents, all are living, and imprint themselves indelibly upon the memory. Remote though they are in time and circumstance, such types of character as Hypatia and Pelagia, Raphael Aben—Ezra and Orestes, Cyril and Philammon, Arsenius and Synesius are no mere lay figures, but living men and women who impress us deeply. There is nothing more terrible in English fiction than the tragedy of Hypatia's death, in which the paganism of the ancient world is seen flickering to extinction in the martyrdom of its noblest, purest votaress at the hands of a fanatical Christian mob.

Westward Ho! is no less brilliant as an historical romance. Probably no other nineteenth century writer could have brought to the composition of this work the same constitutional fitness. In truth, there was much of the Elizabethan Englishman in Kingsley. The life of action would have been more congenial to his nature than the life of books. No doubt had he lived in the days of good Queen Bess, he, too, would have joined the brave Devon sea-dogs in their adven-

tures on the Spanish Main. Their love of enterprise, their enthusiasm for England, their burning hatred of Popery, are no less his. We cannot help feeling, indeed, with all Kingsley's generous humanity, that had he been of those days, a Jesuit would scarcely have escaped burning at his hands. But it is just the author's sympathy with the times, and with the men of the times, even down to their prejudices and fierce dislikes, that has given to *Westward Ho!* its unique success as a romance of that age of young and energetic enthusiasms. It is a manly book, and therefore pre-eminently a book for boys. From cover to cover there is nothing maudlin or weakly sentimental in it. Its verve and energy are infectious. All through the reader is conscious of that tingling of the blood that accompanies the excitement of a succession of high adventures. Moreover, Kingsley is one of our finest literary landscapists. In *Westward Ho!* he is equally true and equally successful in depicting the tangled intricacies of the wild American forest, which at that time he had not seen, as in describing the Coombes of his native Devon, with everyone of which he was personally familiar.

Kingsley was a man of versatile ability, and tried many subjects. His contributions to science and his historical essays have not much scientific or historical value. Some of his children's books, however, are of a high order of merit. *Water Babies* is a delightful child's book, and there could be no better introduction for a child to the mythology of the ancients than

Heroes; or Greek Fairy Tales. *At Last* (1871) records the fact that towards the close of life he was permitted to see with his own eyes that West Indian landscape which he had described so long before, and so realistically in *Westward Ho!*

On the whole, we may say of Kingsley that while he undoubtedly came short of supreme excellence as a writer, he has given us, especially in fiction, some works that deserve to live. Not the least of their merits is the fact that they so distinctly reveal the writer's own personality. His was a nature that could not well be overlooked, nor could his opinions, in whatever form expressed, be altogether ignored. Loved they might be; no less strenuously might they be hated; but neutrality regarding either them or their author was scarcely possible. In every page is depicted a man sincere in belief and profoundly in earnest, who, if he does by the very tenacity of his convictions drift into occasional narrowness and intolerance, is, notwithstanding, most distinctly characterised by the generosity of his temper and the width of his humanity.

William Wilkie Collins (1824–1889) may be said to belong to the school of Charles Dickens, to whose kindness he owed so much for his introduction to the public. There is, however, but little resemblance between them. He can easily surpass Dickens in the construction of a plot, but in all elements of genius comes far behind him. Great as was the

vogue of Collins's works for a time, the seal of permanency is scarcely to be looked for in them. They are conspicuously wanting in the higher literary and artistic qualities. His characters are mechanically drawn: they do not live, or convey to the reader an impression of reality. His style, too, lacks distinction. His supreme quality is seen in his clever handling of sensational narrative, and especially in his ingenious construction of a plot, so woven around a mystery as to hold the reader's attention and curiosity enchained to the last. Mr Swinburne, in his generally favourable criticism, expresses the opinion that the really remarkable genius of this author for invention and construction of incidents was accompanied by an apparent inability to produce his effects without the help of some physical or moral infirmity in one or other of the leading characters of his story. This, he thinks, 'cannot but be regarded as seriously impairing his claims to consideration as an artist or a student.'

The works that show this author's characteristic power at its best are *The Woman in White* (1860) and *The Moonstone* (1868). The rest of his novels are of varying quality; some, such as *No Name*, falling but little behind these masterpieces, while others are not even to be compared with them. To the period preceding his great success in *The Woman in White*, with its powerful delineation of Count Fosco, belong *Hide and Seek* (1854) and *The Dead Secret* (1857): to that which followed his perhaps still greater work

The Moonstone belong *Man and Wife*, *Poor Miss Finch*, and *The New Magdalen*.

Mr Wilkie Collins, born in London in 1824, was the son of William Collins, R.A., the well-known landscape and figure painter, a life of whom was the future novelist's first adventure in literature. After an education at Highbury, followed by three years spent with his father in Italy, he appears to have turned his attention to the law, but finally drifted into literature. His earliest fictions, *Antonina* (1850) and *Basil* (1852), and also his latest stories, came far short of the triumphs of his middle period. Much of his best work was done under the stimulus of Dickens's kindly encouragement, and appeared in the pages of *Household Words* and *All the Year Round*. Wilkie Collins died in 1889.

George MacDonald, LL.D. (1824), was born at Huntly, Aberdeenshire, in 1824. After receiving his education at the parish school of his native town, he passed to King's College, Aberdeen. Subsequently he entered the Congregational ministry, and was actually for a time in charge of a congregation at Arundel. From this position, however, he soon retired, and having attached himself as a lay member to the Church of England, settled in London to pursue a literary career. Poetry first attracted him, and between the years 1855 and 1868 he produced the various volumes of verse that have been noticed elsewhere in this work. It was in 1862 that he made

his first essay as a novelist with his fine story *David Elginbrod*. This was followed in the pages of the *Cornhill* by *The Portent, a Story of the Second Sight*, full of the weird glamour of Celtic imagination (1864). *Alec Forbes of Howglen* (1865) and *Robert Falconer* (1868) well sustained the reputation which these tales had won. Other Scottish tales, like *Malcolm* and *The Marquis of Lossie* and *Sir Gibbie*, followed; and it is noticeable in Dr MacDonald that his best powers come forth only when his fancy is thus working amidst the scenes and characters familiar to his youth.

It is difficult to characterise the peculiar charm of these works. All show the touch of genius, and in addition to their skill in constructing a plot, their beauties of style, their dramatic force, their humour, their pathos, their power of delineating character and of depicting scenes and incidents, display qualities even more noticeable, in their remarkable purity and elevation of tone, their quaint and charming fancies, their moral earnestness, and their air of religious mysticism. There is something especially attractive in the glow of the rich and tolerant humanity that pervades them. They reveal in the author a genius of the heart, a nature that finds it hard to believe that any poor soul can ever be beyond redemption; and if their theology be not that of the creeds, the reader is left with the impression that after all it may not greatly differ from that of heaven.

His novels of English life, such as the *Annals of a Quiet Neighbourhood*, *The Seaboard Parish*, *The Vicar's Daughter*, and *Thomas Wingfield, Curate*, while marked by similar characteristics, are evidently less congenial to his pen.

Dr MacDonald has proved himself one of our best writers for children by a series of beautifully fanciful works extending over his whole literary career. Such are *Phantastes*, *At the Back of the North Wind*, *The Princess and the Goblin*, *Dealings with the Fairies*, *Ranald Bannerman's Boyhood*, and others. He has also enriched Victorian literature with a number of works of a more didactic nature, some of them mystical in their symbolism, none without gleams of insight, the exquisiteness of a rich and delicate imagination, and the glow of a refined and generous humanity.

Dr MacDonald's home is at Bordighera, near Mentone, where in his seventy-third year he still follows the pursuits of literature, his latest novel, *Salted with Fire* (1897), showing but little decay either in the poetic beauty or in the intellectual and moral power that have always characterised his work.

Richard Doddridge Blackmore (1825). It is as the author of *Lorna Doone*, one of the finest romances of Victorian literature, that Mr Blackmore will live. Good though much of his other work is, it comes far short of this *Romance of Exmoor*,

that first launched him into fame twenty-five years ago.

Mr Blackmore is a native of Longworth, Berkshire, and is connected by descent with the saintly author of *The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul*, whose name he bears. Having been educated at Tiverton School and Exeter College, Oxford, he graduated in 1847, was called to the Bar in 1852, and for some time afterwards practised as a Conveyancer. Like so many other novelists, he was early drawn to poetry, having published *The Fate of Franklin—a Poem*, in 1860. He is also the translator of the *Georgics* of Virgil. As a novelist his first important efforts were *Clara Vaughan* (1864) and *Cradock Nowell* (1866), which were succeeded by *Lorna Doone: a Romance of Exmoor* in 1869. Strange to say, this very beautiful work did not win acceptance with the public till two years after publication. Many other noticeable romances and tales followed, such as *The Maid of Sker*, *Alice Lorraine*, *Cripps the Carrier*, *Erema*, *Mary Anerley*, *Christowell*, and *Perlycross* (1894). In a more recent volume of short stories, *Tales of the Telling House* (1896), he returns to the subject of the Doones, whose terrible deeds and fascinating prowess had given him his opportunity so many years before.

Lorna Doone, his masterpiece, has many fine qualities of genius. It describes with extraordinary fidelity and minuteness of detail the borderland between Devon and Somerset; and no one who has read this book can ever forget its powerful description of the great

snowstorm. Local character and dialect Mr Blackmore is able to give with a much nearer approach to accuracy than even Mr Hardy can lay claim to. Poetic feeling and the glamour of romance hang around this picture of England as it was two hundred years ago. The brave and nobly-born but bloody Doones of Bagworthy Forest, the redoubtable, and, in contrast with them, even respectable highwayman, Tom Faggus, and John Ridd himself, the hero of the story, such a delightful mixture of honest simplicity, native shrewdness, Herculean strength, and almost womanly gentleness—to say nothing of such charming female characters as Lorna and Ruth—go to make up a work which after Scott it would be hard to beat among the historical romances of English literature.

Mr Blackmore, whose continued vigour and vitality are proved by his fine tale *Dariel: a Romance of Surrey*, now running its course in *Blackwood's Magazine*, is said to divide a quiet old age between the pleasures of literature and the cultivation of a large garden, the produce of which he sends to the London markets.

Mrs Margaret Oliphant (1828-1897), one of the most prolific writers of the time, was born near Musselburgh, Midlothian, in 1828. Her first fiction, *Passages in the Life of Mrs Margaret Maitland of Sunnyside* (1849), made her famous before she had completed her twenty-first year. Since that time she has never

ceased to pour forth a stream of tales, marked on the whole by an unusual skill in the construction of plot, vigour in the delineation of character and sweet wholesomeness of tone. She has always been consistently womanly, and has shown no favour to the recent movement in fiction that has given us the ill-omened novel of sex. Some of her best tales, such as *Margaret Maitland*, *Adam Græme of Mossgray*, and *Lilliesleaf*, take their characters and incidents from familiar Scottish life. Much, however, of her finest work is also to be found in the series of clerical tales known as *The Chronicles of Carlingford* (1862-66), including *Salem Chapel*, *The Perpetual Curate*, *The Rector*, and *Miss Marjoribanks*. Merely to name the many other fictions from the pen of this writer would occupy far more space than can here be given to them. Her weakness, indeed, lies here. For it was inevitable, with such rapidity of production and such an enormous literary output, that there should be inequalities and occasional shortcomings in her work. Still, the reader will be more disposed to wonder at the high level at which, in most cases, they are sustained than at any failures or shortcomings they may occasionally exhibit. There will never be altogether lacking the charm of a well-told tale, a bright and pungent humour, the power to read the heart, and the various graces of an accomplished literary art. Notwithstanding Mrs Oliphant's advanced years and multiplied sorrows, her wonderful vitality to the last gave little sign of decay, and she continued to the day of

her death to be one of the ornaments of a profession which she had adorned for nearly fifty years. The touch in such later stories as *Old Mr Tredgold* (1896) and *The Two Marys* (1896) is still sure and firm, and much of the old freshness remains.

But Mrs Oliphant has been more than a writer of novels. From her indefatigable pen has proceeded a series of valuable memoirs and biographies of Edward Irving, Laurence Oliphant, Thomas Chalmers, Principal Tulloch, Montalembert, St Francis of Assisi, Joan of Arc, and Richard Brinsley Sheridan. The same brilliant gifts are to be found in her *Literary History of England* (1882), *Historical Sketches of the Reign of George II.* (1869), and *Historical Characters of the Reign of Queen Anne* (1894). Her industry and versatility are still further shown in the series of works on historically and romantically interesting great cities for which she is responsible. These include *The Makers of Florence*, *The Makers of Venice*, *The Makers of Rome*, *Royal Edinburgh*, and *Jerusalem*. She has also edited the series of Foreign Classics published by the Messrs Blackwood, and has herself contributed to it the volumes devoted to Dante and Cervantes. Mrs Oliphant died at her residence on Wimbledon Common on the 25th of June 1897.

George Meredith (1828). There is a certain aloofness in the position of George Meredith as a novelist. We can trace a connection between Smollett and Dickens, and between Fielding and Thackeray,

but we can find no literary school or succession for George Meredith. The distinction of originality of style and method is undoubtedly his. But this very originality which commends him to large sections of cultured readers, especially of the literary class, will probably continue to prejudice him with readers in general. It was long before he found his audience, and even now when he has reached, if indeed he has not passed, the zenith of his popularity, his readers are more remarkable for their intelligence than for their number. This is not to be wondered at. In reading Meredith the same question arises that presents itself in the case of Carlyle and Browning. Has the literary man, professing to address the world, the right to perplex the ordinary intelligence by pedantries and obscurities, by far-fetched subtleties and eccentricities of style? If he claims that right, he cannot justly complain if the great multitude of those who read, severely leave him alone. But when all this has been said, it remains true, as it is also true of Carlyle and Browning, that notwithstanding the often forbidding subtlety of Meredith's style, his works contain a tonic quality which is fitted to brace, stimulate, and refresh a certain class of minds beyond any other works of fiction published in our time.

George Meredith was born in Hampshire in 1828. After an education conducted partly in this country and partly in Germany, he studied for the English Bar, but like so many of our popular authors, he soon abandoned the law for literature. As has been noticed

elsewhere, Mr Meredith began his literary career in 1851 as a poet. As such, however, he received but little encouragement, and although he has never altogether forsaken his first love, it is as a writer of prose fictions that he is henceforth to be chiefly noted.

In 1855 appeared *The Shaving of Shagpat, an Arabian Entertainment.* Two years later he produced *Farina, a Legend of Cologne.* These were followed in 1859 by his first great novel, *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel*, and in regular succession by all the other well-known tales that are associated with his pen :— *Evan Harrington* (1861), *Rhoda Fleming* (1865), *Vittoria* (1866), *The Adventures of Harry Richmond* (1871), *Beauchamp's Career* (1875), *The Egoist* (1879), *The Tragic Comedians* (1881), *Diana of the Crossways* (1885), *One of our Conquerors* (1891), *Lord Ormont and his Aminta* (1894), *The Tale of Chloe*, &c., and *The Amazing Marriage* (1895).

These constitute a body of work of the utmost intellectual value, such as no other living novelist could have produced. Necessarily they address themselves to the elect few. Their ripe wisdom, their flashing wit, their extraordinary brilliance, their profound and searching analysis of human character and motive, are far beyond the powers of the ordinary reader of novels, to whom, however, their occasional faults of obscurity, perversity, and even dulness are only too apparent. Even the fittest reader and staunchest Meredithian must often be tempted to say

of him, as of Carlyle and Browning—'How much better the part would be than the whole!'

Of the works of Meredith, *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel*, *The Egoist*, and *Diana of the Crossways*, may be chosen to illustrate this writer in some of his best and most characteristic qualities. In all will be noted his excessive fondness for epigram, his brilliant but over-elaborated humour, his often magnificent phrasing, his profusion of richly-coloured imagery, and his large and comprehensive views of life. With him more than with most writers different readers will have their individual preferences. Some will find in the greater human interest and unique completeness of *The Ordeal* his choicest and most abiding work. No one, indeed, who has ever read this tale can be insensible to the tenderness of feeling and the glow of poetic beauty in the chapters that describe the dawning of love in the soul of Richard. By the use of names borrowed from Prospero's island of enchantments, Meredith would seem to challenge comparison even with the author of *The Tempest* himself; and in presence of these idyllic scenes, unequalled in the modern novel, we cannot help acquitting him of arrogance.

Others will rather find in *The Egoist* their favourite's masterpiece and greatest bid for immortality. And truly the exhibition of force in this book is marvellous. It overflows with wisdom, and if the relentless and scathing irony of his dissection of Sir Willoughby Patterne (the egoist) is only half agree-

able to the reader, it is probably because of the haunting suspicion that this satire that bites so cruelly home is after all an allegory of the phenomenal selfishness of human nature in general. The character-drawing throughout shows the firm, sure hand of the artist combined with the insight of unmistakable genius. The other characters, such as Clara Middleton, 'the dainty rogue in porcelain,' serve as admirable foils to the central figure of the story. But to read *The Egoist* is certainly no holiday amusement: most readers will rather find it a severe intellectual exercise.

Diana of the Crossways is less difficult, and for that reason, as well as for its brilliant and witty dialogue, and its delightful presentment of one of the most charming of Meredith's heroines, will always have its following.

Whatever may be Meredith's place in the future of English fiction, it is impossible to dispute his genius, although there are many readers who, repelled by the forms which that genius has taken, will not be prepared to admit with his brother writers that he is the greatest novelist now living in the latter half of the Victorian era.

CHAPTER III

Later Victorian Novelists

If the somewhat arbitrary division of Victorian novelists into earlier and later be accepted, it will be convenient to consider all those that had made their reputations before the close of the 'golden period' of the sixties as belonging to the former class, and all that reached this distinction after that period as belonging to the latter. The first half of the Victorian era was also the greater. It held not only such conspicuous figures as Dickens, Thackeray, Charlotte Brontë, and George Eliot, but also a number of other writers, less, but only less, than they. Some of them, like George MacDonald, Mr Blackmore, and George Meredith, are happily still to be seen in the literary firmament like clear suns burning to a mellow setting. Admirable work has no doubt been done since by a multitude of writers, whose command of literary resource, and meritorious as well as abundant achievement, are among the glories of the reign. But if we except the novelists just mentioned, and add the names of Thomas Hardy, who in the

great manner represents the earlier rather than the later period, and of Robert Louis Stevenson—alas! too early taken—who in the exquisiteness of rich gifts of imagination and of style was also in touch with the giants, we find but few of the later Victorian novelists that rise above a respectable mediocrity.

Thomas Hardy (1840). There may be doubt in some minds whether George Meredith or Thomas Hardy is entitled to rank as the first of living British novelists. But there can be no doubt that if the first place be given to George Meredith, the second will fall to Thomas Hardy.

The latter writer was born near Dorchester in 1840, and still lives among the scenes he has so often and so graphically described. At seventeen he was articled to an ecclesiastical architect, but is said to have found time, with certain of his companions, to cultivate the study of the classics and theology. When he was twenty years of age he went to London to continue his professional studies under Sir Arthur Blomfield. In 1863 he received the prize and medal of the Institute of British Architects for an essay on 'Coloured Brick and Terra-Cotta Architecture,' and in the same year obtained Sir W. Tite's prize for Architectural design. Professional pursuits, however, did not occupy all his time, for on coming to London he had entered himself as a student of modern languages at King's College, and the years that followed the successes just referred to were largely given up to the ambition of

becoming known as a poet. But his verses, it would seem, were not appreciated, and therefore remained unpublished.

Turning to fiction, Mr Hardy produced his first novel, *Desperate Remedies*, in 1871. It had a mixed reception. *Under the Greenwood Tree*, published in the following year, showed a decided advance in artistic qualities. *A Pair of Blue Eyes* followed in 1873. But it was not till *Far from the Madding Crowd* began its course in the pages of the *Cornhill Magazine* in 1874 that the attention of the public was fairly roused. This work, especially by its graphic and humorous representations of peasant life in southern England, suggested to many the craftsmanship of George Eliot, was indeed actually mistaken for her work, and is still regarded by not a few as the best of all his novels. His power was well sustained in the three tales that followed:—*The Hand of Ethelberta* (1876), *The Return of the Native* (1878), and *The Trumpet-Major* (1880). Many critics agree with Mr Lionel Johnson and Miss Macdonell, both of whom have recently produced works upon Mr Hardy, in putting an especial value upon *The Return of the Native*. Of *A Laodicean* (1881) and *Two on a Tower* (1882) less can be said. More recently, however, *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886), *The Woodlanders* (1886–87), and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891), have again placed this writer in his more powerful qualities before the public. It is to be regretted that if they have grown in strength, they have not also grown in wholesomeness. The last

particularly has been vehemently discussed, and even condemned, as likely to be hurtful from an ethical point of view. Certainly matters were not made better by the publication in 1895 of *Jude the Obscure*—a work which shows qualities of genius unsurpassed by anything Mr Hardy has yet written, but which is marred by much that is actually revolting in its characters and incidents, as well as in the degrading view of life and human nature which it presents. His last book, *The Well-Beloved* (1897)—the last published, but not the last written—works out, with only partial success, an exceedingly fantastical idea. His hero is in love with an ideal woman, and is for ever finding his ideal embodied in new forms, only, however, to discover his mistake when fresh objects present themselves. The climax is reached when the author shows us his hero, grown old in fruitless love, wooing a girl as his embodied ideal, whose grandmother, and then whose mother he had also wooed in former periods of life. Manifestly this is only saved from being exceedingly repugnant by its utter absurdity.

In addition to these longer tales, Mr Hardy is the author of several volumes of short stories: *Wessex Tales* (1888), *A Group of Noble Dames* (1891), and *Life's Little Ironies* (1894).

In all his tales, Mr Hardy makes a very free use of the term 'Wessex,' as including Dorset and parts of Somerset, Wiltshire, Berkshire, Devon and Hampshire. By innumerable pictures, the forms of this Wessex landscape are vividly portrayed, not only in

their outward physical features, but also in their underlying moods, almost as living things endued with fateful influence over the human characters that play out their parts before them. He has the power of conceiving of Nature sympathetically, and of describing her in a manner both realistic and poetical. His knowledge is not that of the keen observer or trained naturalist merely: he has the still more intimate knowledge that comes from a poet's insight. Referring to this, Mr William Watson has said—'One of Mr Hardy's especially poetic traits is his manner of sometimes using external Nature, not simply as a background or a setting, but as a sort of superior spectator and chorus, that makes strangely unconcerned comments from the vantage-ground of a sublime aloofness upon the ludicrous tragedy of the human lot.'

Mr Hardy is an unequal writer. He has his great moments, but is often dull and artificial. Although dealing so largely with peasant types and rustic situations, there is seldom anything idyllic in his treatment of them. It is in the tragic moments, when his human puppets are being driven by forces they are powerless to resist, that he reaches his highest power. He does not always yield pleasant reading. There are many to whom his types of character, situations, and ethical standards are nothing less than revolting. And what a sadness hangs around these tales! The humours of his peasants may now and then call forth a grim smile, but their general atmosphere is the gloom of a dreary

pessimism. His voice to the age is without a message of hope or gladness. The actors in his tragi-comedy of life are represented as in the grip of a chill and inexorable fate that declares happiness to be incompatible with knowledge, and precludes the possibility of hope either in this world or the next.

Such a view of life alone would account for the fact that Mr Hardy has never won the place in popular regard that might have been expected from his unquestionable genius. Other causes may have conduced to this. For example, a certain stiffness and formality is often noticeable in his style. Like George Eliot in her decadent period, he is prone to use the language of the schools. But after all, this use of an academic manner and pedantic scientific phraseology is only occasional. We are far more frequently struck with his dramatic realism, and the power with which he can set forth in simple and direct words a striking scene in Nature, or a still more moving tragedy of human life.

His pictures of women are interesting, but are not likely to secure the favour of women themselves. Mr J. M. Barrie tells how he saw in the margin of a library copy of one of Mr Hardy's novels the words, written in a lady's hand,—'How I hate Thomas Hardy!' And we can scarcely wonder. He endows his heroines with every charm of manner and physical beauty. But how weak and foolish, how fickle and unscrupulous he makes them!

We may regret that Mr Hardy's subjects and

method of treatment are not different from what they are. It is, however, unquestionable that his are the wide horizons and high atmosphere of the great writers. As an accomplished artist in the description both of Nature and of man in South and South-western England, as a dramatic novelist for whom the tragedy of human life in its most complicated forms has an irresistible attraction, and as a trained psychologist who is never so much at home as when following through their windings the intricacies of human motive and passion, he will doubtless retain his high distinction. On the other hand, he will probably continue to repel by the sombreness of his view of life, and by his apparent despair of ever finding a remedy, either here or hereafter, for the wrongs that ruin the individual and afflict society.

Sir Walter Besant (1838), who, amongst living men, more perhaps than any other writer represents the spirit and the claims of literature, was born at Portsmouth in 1838, and received his education at King's College, London, and Christ's College, Cambridge, where he graduated with high honours in mathematics. Having abandoned his intention of entering the Church, he became Senior Professor in the Royal College of Mauritius, a position which ill-health compelled him to resign. On returning to London he gave himself to a literary career. *Studies in Early French Poetry* (1868) was his first work. In 1871, as Secretary of the Palestine Exploration Fund,

he wrote a *History of Jerusalem* in collaboration with the late Professor Palmer. It was in the same year that he entered upon his literary partnership with Mr James Rice. The latter was at that time proprietor and editor of *Once a Week*, and Mr Besant has a very interesting tale to tell of how the fact that one of his papers had been printed in the pages of that magazine without correction led to an indignant remonstrance on his part, how that again was followed by an interview with the editor, and how in turn that ended in a lifelong friendship and a ten years' literary copartnery. The latter proved more satisfactory than such connections usually do, having been, as Mr Besant has told us, conducted throughout with perfect accord, and without the least difference of opinion. Of the twelve or more novels for which these authors are jointly responsible, the best known are *Ready Money Mortiboy* (1872), *The Golden Butterfly* (1876), and *The Seamy Side* (1881).

When Mr Rice died in 1882, Mr Besant continued to pour forth novels as before, with little apparent difference to show that there had been a change in the manner of their production. The first of these, *All Sorts and Conditions of Men* (1882), is fitly dedicated to the memory of Mr Rice. It was followed by *All in a Garden Fair* (1883), *Dorothy Forster* (1884), *Uncle Jack* (1885), *Children of Gibeon* (1886), *The World went very well then* (1887), *For Faith and Freedom* (1888), *The Bell of St Paul's* (1889), *Armorel of Lyonnesse* (1890), *St Katherine's by the Tower* (1891),

The Ivory Gate (1892), *The Rebel Queen* (1893), *Beyond the Dreams of Avarice* (1895), *In Deacon's Orders*, &c. (1895), *The Master Craftsman* (1899), and *The City of Refuge* (1897).

In other departments of literature Sir Walter Besant has produced a *Life of Professor Palmer*, the *Eulogy of Richard Jefferies*, *The Art of Fiction*, and histories of *London* and *Westminster;* and has edited an important work on *The Survey of Western Palestine.*

From the first this author was noticeably successful, and he has never had to complain of the fickleness of popular applause. He appeals to a larger body of readers than either Meredith or Hardy, his subjects and his treatment alike commending themselves to the general taste. No one knows better the art of handling delicate subjects without offence. His tales, moreover, require just that amount of thought that yields enjoyment — they never spoil pleasure by a sense of effort. They show a knowledge of life and character that may not be so subtle and intuitive as that of the novelists just referred to, but it is considerable, and gives the impression of having been gleaned from an intimate personal acquaintance with human nature under various conditions and in various social spheres. His plots are ingenious, and are enlivened by an abundance of incident and adventure. The characters are sharply outlined and well sustained. He has a pleasant humour, and a style that never tortures by its complexity or affectations. To all these qualties of the successful novelist, Besant unites

the heart of the philanthropist and social reformer, and an attitude, generous and hopeful even towards life in its baser and less attractive forms. He sees how unreasonable it would be to expect that there should be any appreciation of better things, or any true nobility of character or elevation of sentiment amidst the dull misery, the abject and crushing monotony of a life spent amidst the slums of Whitechapel and Wapping, and earnestly pleads that something may be done for its relief. In *All Sorts and Conditions of Men*, Besant himself sketched a plan with this object in view, and he has had the singular good fortune of seeing his ideas realised in the erection of The People's Palace for the instruction, amusement, and elevation of the poverty-stricken millions of eastern London.

It is idle to ask how far such work as Sir Walter Besant's is likely to last. At least we may say that he has been a good servant for the profit and pleasure of his own generation. And at a time when there is so much objectionable fiction abroad, bad in art and even worse in moral tone, it is not a little to say that he has ministered to only the purest tastes in both. The love and knowledge of nature, the fresh and genial humour, the breezy, healthy optimism of such a writer, have perhaps a finer moral effect than many sermons.

It only remains to add, that as the editor of *The Author*, a journal devoted to the interests of literary men and women, he has placed the younger generation

of writers under lasting obligations by his judicious advice and wise guidance in all matters connected with the publication of books.

Mr Besant received the honour of knighthood in 1895.

William Black (1841). There cannot be many middle-class homes in Great Britain where the works of William Black are not known and appreciated. For a quarter of a century he has enjoyed an enviable popularity, and few will be disposed to grudge him the reputation he has won. For even if there should be something of the commercial faculty in the certainty with which he gauges the wants of his readers, and the tact with which he supplies them, there is also very much more than this. His novels everywhere show an admirable art and a high faculty set honestly and strenuously to work, and bear throughout the imprint of an individuality that is entirely his own.

Born in Glasgow in 1841, Mr Black's earliest ambition was to be a landscape painter. He was still, however, in his teens when he began to write for the *Glasgow Weekly Citizen*. In 1864 he came to London, and shortly afterwards found employment on the staff of the *Morning Star*, for which he acted as Special Correspondent during the Prusso-Austrian War of 1866. A long connection as Assistant Editor with the *Daily News* followed.

His first novel, *Love or Marriage*, was published in

1867, but was not a success. *In Silk Attire* (1869) was more favourably received. *Kilmeny* (1870) came next, and was followed in 1871 by *A Daughter of Heth*, which first placed the author's reputation on a secure basis, and is still regarded by many as the strongest thing he has yet done. *The Strange Adventures of a Phaeton* (1872) carries out very happily a quite original idea, that of making the characters develop the elements of a pleasing love story while performing a journey from London to Edinburgh in a phaeton. A greater work followed in *A Princess of Thule* (1873), undoubtedly one of his best, as it is still one of his most popular novels. The scene, as in so many of these tales, is laid partly in London and partly in the North. And here, as elsewhere, Mr Black displays what may be called his most distinctive gift—a power of painting vividly and with much charm of poetical beauty the witcheries of light, colour, and atmosphere that are to be seen on West Highland lochs and amidst the islands of the far Hebrides. The central figure in this story is on the whole the finest of Mr Black's many exquisite pictures of sweet, pure womanhood. In *Three Feathers* (1875) the scene is transferred to Cornwall, but in *Madcap Violet* (1876) we have once again the double setting of London drawing-rooms and dreamy Highland lochs. The mannerisms of the writer, as well as much that is best in his style and method, can be favourably studied in this delightful picture of a wilful and unfortunate, but tender and lovable girlhood. *Green Pastures and Piccadilly*

(1877) recalls for us the pleasant quartette of the phaeton adventures, but carries these lively personages further afield, and shows them in relation to new scenes and characters. A bolder experiment marks the advent of *Macleod of Dare* (1878), in which the background of familiar sea- and land-scape is still presented, not as ornament to some sweet idyll of happy love, but as a foil to a woman's fickle cruelty and a man's broken heart and lapsing brain.

Besides these tales, Mr Black has written *Sunrise*, *The Beautiful Wretch*, *Yolande*, *Judith Shakespeare*, *White Heather*, *Sabrina Zanbra*, *In Far Lochaber*, and *The Strange Adventures of a House-Boat*, introducing to us again, with pleasant reinforcements, the genial company of the phaeton. These various works have sustained, but cannot be said to have added materially to the reputation won by *The Daughter of Heth* and *A Princess of Thule*. Among Mr Black's latest novels are *The Handsome Humes* (1893), *Highland Cousins* (1894), and *Briseis* (1896).

No one has furnished healthier and purer entertainment, especially to the young of the present generation. It may be, as has been said, that interest in these novels is now on the wane ; if so, it is probably because their subjects lie so much in the domestic sphere, and pander so little to an unhealthy craving for excitement. Manlier men and sweeter women we could not wish to meet, nor could we reasonably desire to have them set before us with a more charming and exquisite art. Of tragic passion, and even of pathos

in its intenser forms, there is but little in these pages. Even such humour as they show most frequently takes the form of genial pleasantry. The thought, moreover, is a trifle commonplace, while of the dark problems with which it seems so much the business of the modern novel to perplex and make miserable the much-enduring average reader, there is absolutely nothing. Instead of this we have a well-constructed, well-told tale, over which plays a pleasant ripple of thought, suffused with a sentiment that is always generous and healthy, like the breezes that blow over the Scottish moors and lochs this author loves so well. No doubt these tales are open to the charge of sameness. The landscapes, and even the characters and situations, we have seen before, and we may have even caught the trick of them. But if we miss the robustness, the various energy and depth of a more virile genius, it is but right to consider the simple unalloyed pleasure obtained at so little cost of pain which these works have afforded, and conceive that probably to give such pleasure was the sole aim and ambition of the author.

Of all the tales, *The Daughter of Heth* has perhaps the best chance of abiding, especially in virtue of the inimitable 'Whaup,' one of the finest creations of a boy in English literature.

Joseph Henry Shorthouse was born at Birmingham in 1834. Whatever value may be assigned to the works of this writer as a whole, he deserves the

highest praise for having done one thing supremely well. In *John Inglesant* (1880), he maintained, if he did not revive, the best traditions of the historical romance. One of Scott's greatest achievements in this field had been his masterly and vivid presentment of James I. of England. Mr Shorthouse in *John Inglesant* was scarcely less successful in portraying that monarch's more subtly composed and more unhappy son. This was a task of great difficulty, calling for the utmost delicacy and even exquisiteness of handling. But Mr Shorthouse brought to it an abundance of these qualities, together with a spiritual insight, a ripe and sympathetic knowledge of the inner life of the times, a power of comprehending and of setting forth the complex problems, political and religious, that were then working themselves out in individuals and in society, that caused *John Inglesant* to stand forth among the books of the time as one of a rare and subtle charm, and of a penetrating force. Several works followed, such as *The Platonism of Wordsworth*, revealing the author's interest in the more mystical forms of thought, after which came a series of romances—*The Little Schoolmaster Mark*, *Sir Percival*, *The Countess Eve*, and *Blanche, Lady Falaise*, none of which, however, attracted anything like the attention that had been bestowed upon *John Inglesant*.

Thomas Henry Hall Caine (1853), born at Runcorn in 1853, like Mr Thomas Hardy, began life

as an architect. A few tentative efforts in poetry and criticism, followed by some editorial and journalistic work in London, were succeeded by his first novel, *The Shadow of a Crime* (1885), which at once brought him into notice. This interesting romance of the early years of the Restoration somewhat resembles the greater *Lorna Doone* of Blackmore. It shows us life in remote Cumberland dales darkened by regicide prosecutions, and complicated by private hate. More noticeable still, however, is the heroism of sublime self-renunciation which, with fine artistic effect, he places in the foreground of the story. Here, as ever afterwards, the high purpose and unstinted effort of this author's work are manifest to the most careless reader.

As a novelist Mr Hall Caine has known few, if any, of the difficulties and pangs of publication. Almost from the first it has been his good fortune to have rival publishers bidding against each other for the privilege of producing his writings. It is to his credit that this has not made him careless, or caused him to weaken his powers by over-production.

It was in the early part of his career, while he was still pruning his wings for flight, that he made the acquaintance of Dante Gabriel Rossetti. At a time when the poet was fast losing his hold on life, Mr Hall Caine was one of several who gave him the benefit of their sympathy and companionship. For a time both in London and in Cumberland Rossetti and Hall Caine lived together, and while

the association could not have been without its irksomeness and anxieties for the younger man, he confesses that he received much stimulus and help from this intimate contact with so rich and full a mind.

From the first we are impressed with this writer's intellectual force and imaginative power, but still more with his moral earnestness. His ideal of the novelist's art is high, and it is strenuously, even laboriously, pursued. Such works as *The Deemster* (1887), *The Bondman* (1890), and *The Manxman* (1894) have merits of a high order apart from any archæological value that may attach to them in setting forth the scenery and peculiar customs of the Isle of Man, where his own residence, Greeba Castle, is situated. It may even seem to many that the fine quality of these writings is rather marred by the presence of this element, which often tempts the writer into a variety of local and antiquarian details not necessarily required for the purposes of fiction. All the novels mentioned deal with phases of life and character into which an element of intense tragic interest enters, and despite a tendency to diffuseness, appeal to an instinctive liking for a lofty purpose in life, and for fine artistic work. The writer's conception of righteousness and of the inevitable Nemesis that follows wrong-doing reminds of George Eliot, although in Hall Caine there may seem sometimes to be a prolonged and too realistic dwelling both upon the acts by which righteousness is im-

pugned, and upon the forms in which punishment is dealt out.

The Scapegoat (1891) is remarkable for fine qualities as a work of imaginative art, but especially for the high intensity of its conception of self-sacrifice, realised amidst totally different surroundings. Its scene is Morocco, and in its central figure, Israel ben Oliel, grandly conceived and impressively set forth, we have one of the noblest characters in recent fiction. In its dignity, its sublime renunciation, and its heroic unselfishness, we are irresistibly reminded, probably without the author intending it, of that other grander life that was lived for human redemption among the Galilean hills. It is interesting to note, in connection with this, the rumour that the work upon which Mr Hall Caine is understood to have spent the greatest amount of pains and labour is a *Life of Christ*, which still, however, remains unfinished, because it has hitherto failed to reach the high standard of excellence at which its author has aimed. His earliest works were *Recollections of Rossetti*, *Sonnets of Three Centuries* (1882), *Cobwebs of Criticism* (1883). To which have to be added, *A Son of Hagar* (1887), *The Prophet* (1892), and *The Christian* (1897).

Mrs Humphry Ward (1851). It has already been pointed out that the later Victorian novel has passed through phases in its development that may possibly surprise not a little the generations that are to follow. Thus, certain works have reached a popu-

larity, judged by the number of editions to which they have run, that can only be called astounding, and that may not readily explain itself to those who see them afterwards under changed and perhaps healthier conditions. Some of these books deal with the problems of faith, and although much moral earnestness, a beautiful glow of sentiment, an abundance of learning, and even occasional touches of genius cannot be denied them, yet their astonishing success must be considered due rather to the anxious fears of the friends of orthodoxy on the one hand, and the malicious hopes of its enemies on the other, than to any superior merit in themselves.

The *Robert Elsmere* (1888) of Mrs Humphry Ward was a novel of this class, and caused no little sensation by its picture of a fine but weak nature under the influence of stronger personalities drifting away from old ecclesiastical moorings. But the processes of thought by which the intensely religious and emotional Vicar of Murewell became the London Secularist lecturer and founder of *The New Brotherhood of Christ* are not convincing. Moreover, such a conception of the founder of Christianity by such a man would seem to be logically compatible only with the supernatural Christ of orthodox belief. No doubt the book has much in it that is beautiful, especially in its earlier part, the scene of which is laid amongst the tender beauty and quaint rusticities of Westmoreland dales. But it loses charm, and indeed grows dull and inartistic as it becomes more and more involved in

theological polemics. It leaves the intelligent reader with the conviction that after all the orthodox position has neither been truly grasped nor correctly stated.

The success of *Robert Elsmere* caused Mrs Ward's next story, *David Grieve* (1892), to be eagerly sought for. Faith problems are here also, but the story is really more concerned with insurgent human passion than with the drift from orthodoxy. Great power is shown in the delineation of some of the characters, and also of situations of vivid tragic interest. But the Paris episodes are extremely unpleasant, and fail as much in an artistic as in a moral point of view.

Marcella (1894) is upon other lines, and depends upon certain topics of the hour, such as the labour question and socialism generally, for much of its value and interest. Apart, however, from these, it is a work of considerable power. The characters are sharply drawn and consistently worked out. There are beautiful bits of description of scenery. The interest of the story, notwithstanding its great length, is well sustained. Throughout, the careful literary artist is to be seen, working with an amplitude of resource and a consciousness of effort worthy of all praise. There followed *Marcella* in 1895, a short story, entitled *Bessie Costrell*, in which the writer has done no more than sustain the reputation won by her longer works. *Sir George Tressady*, which appeared in 1896, contains the author's finest work up to the present time. All Mrs Humphry Ward's brilliant gifts are to be seen at their best in this novel, which presents vivid pictures of

London political life, with which the interest of social and domestic problems has been cleverly interwoven. The Marcella of a former novel reappears now as Lady Maxwell, wife of Lord Maxwell, President of the Council. She has the old irresistible charm of manner and nobility of character, marred just a little by the mischiefs wrought by the zeal of her political propaganda. Little as we can sympathise with the shallow, selfish Letty Sewell whom Sir George Tressady makes his wife, and who is so sharply contrasted with Lady Maxwell, it is impossible to resist the conclusion that she had some excuse for her jealous and petulant humours. A story conducted on such lines could scarcely be expected to end happily, although that is probably what nine out of every ten readers would desire. But whatever may be thought of Sir George's tragic death in the mine just when matters seemed to be arranging themselves for domestic reconciliation, no one can fail to realise the great power with which the closing scenes are described.

Mrs Humphry Ward, whose maiden name is Mary Augusta Arnold, is a granddaughter of the famous Dr Arnold, headmaster of Rugby, and the niece of Matthew Arnold, the poet. Her father, Thomas Arnold, was the second son of Dr Arnold, and is himself known as the author of a well-known *Manual of English Literature.* At the time his daughter Mary was born he held an educational position at Hobart, Tasmania, his wife being the daughter of Governor Sorrell of that colony. On returning to

England, the family lived for some time at Oxford. But Thomas Arnold was unsettled in his religious beliefs, and drifted first from Anglicanism to Rome, and then from Rome to Scepticism, and then back again to Rome.

At twenty-one, Mary Arnold was married to Mr Thomas Humphry Ward, Fellow of Brasenose College, Oxford, and in 1880 they removed to London for the purpose of giving themselves to literary work. Mr Humphry Ward is well known as the editor of an admirable anthology of the English poets, with critical introductions from his own pen and those of many of the foremost critics of the time.

Mrs Humphry Ward published her first book, *Milly and Olly, a story of Child Life*, in 1881. With her earliest novel, *Miss Bretherton*, published in 1884, she won considerable notice, although it scarcely prepared the public for the astonishing success of *Robert Elsmere* in 1888. This work quickly passed through many editions, both in this country and in America, and has had the honour of being translated into several of the Continental languages.

Much may still be expected from this author. She is too conscientious in effort to overwrite herself, and she shows a mastery both of style and literary art that are the best guarantee that what she gives to the public will reach a high level of attainment. No other woman novelist now living approaches her in power or so nearly realises in her work the best traditions of the Victorian novel. She is, however,

in some danger of turning the novel into a thesis for the diffusion of her own opinions on the social and religious questions of the day. Much of her past success has undoubtedly been due to this element in her works: pursued further, it might be destructive both of her art and her popularity.

Robert Louis Balfour Stevenson (1850-1894). It is a relief to escape from the problem novel with its more or less hectic atmosphere to tales that are tales indeed, full of adventure, and suffused with the glow of old romance. Breathless with interest, we follow their heroes from one hazard to another, scarcely requiring to think, but with an imagination thrilling with excited sympathy. We feel that the free air is blowing round us, that the pulses of our blood are beating healthily, and that a tonic as of the hills or of the heaving sea is bracing us to newness of life. Among those who have done good service in connection with this return to the romantic method are R. L. Stevenson and Stanley Weyman, Conan Doyle, and Anthony Hope.

Of all the writers of English fiction of the younger generation, the impression of the highest genius was probably conveyed by Robert Louis Stevenson—an impression which his many admirers hold, notwithstanding the conviction that nothing he has ever done, however exquisite, has quite realised all his possibilities. It is indeed singularly to Stevenson's credit that no achievement in literature to which he might have

risen, however high, would have been altogether a surprise to anyone acquainted with his work. For all have admitted in him a rare distinction of style, the qualities of a fine imagination, humour and pathos in a high degree, the fancy of the poet, and the sympathy, both wise and tender, of the genial lover of his kind.

Born at Edinburgh in 1850, Stevenson got his education at various private schools, and afterwards at his native university. Sprung from a family that had an hereditary distinction in lighthouse engineering, every opportunity was given him of qualifying for the same profession. But he was incorrigibly a genius, to whom the routine of study was not only abhorrent, but impossible. It is to be feared that his professors saw him but little, that his college halls were the hills that environed his romantic town, and that his chief companions were the choice books that accompanied him in his rambles and ministered to his fancy. Through all this, however, there ran a distinct purpose of self-education. In his interesting paper, entitled *A College Magazine*, he says: 'All through my boyhood and youth I was known and pointed out for the pattern of an idler; and yet I was always busy on my own private end, which was to learn to write. I kept always two books in my pocket, one to read and one to write in. As I walked, my mind was busy fitting what I saw with appropriate words; when I sat by the roadside I would either read, or a pencil and a penny version-book would be in my hand, to note down the features of the scene or commemorate some

halting stanzas. Thus I lived with words. And what I thus wrote was for no ulterior use, it was written consciously for practice. It was not so much that I wished to be an author (though I wished that too) as that I had vowed that I would learn to write.'

His home exercises were conceived with the same intent. 'Whenever I read a book or a passage that particularly pleased me, in which a thing was said or an effect rendered with propriety, in which there was either conspicuous force or some happy distinction in the style, I must sit down at once and set myself to ape that quality. I was unsuccessful, and I knew it; and tried again, and was again unsuccessful and always unsuccessful; but at least in these vain bouts I got some practice in rhythm, in harmony, in construction, and the co-ordination of parts. I have thus played the sedulous ape to Hazlitt, to Lamb, to Wordsworth, to Sir Thomas Browne, to Defoe, to Hawthorne, to Montaigne, to Baudelaire, and to Obermann.'

With his whole heart thus given to literature, it was natural that he should finally abandon the scientific pursuits in which it had been sought to train him. Lest, however, he should fail as an author, he qualified himself for the Scottish Bar, and for a time actually wore the advocate's gown and wig, and walked the floor of the Parliament House of Edinburgh. Bad health compelled him to leave his native city, and he became a wanderer. His impressions and many interesting experiences he has incorporated in various exquisite books of travel.

During the last six years of his life his home was Vailima in Samoa, one of the beautiful islands of the Pacific. Here, at four o'clock in the afternoon of the 2nd of December 1894, he suddenly fell into a state of unconsciousness, from which he never rallied. He died at eight the same evening. When the sad event became known in this country and America, where he was a great favourite, the press notices, unusually full and cordial, did ample justice to the beauties of his style and the many fascinations of his character. By almost universal consent, he was declared to be the legitimate successor of Scott in old romance, and the words of William Watson, the poet, written in a copy of Stevenson's *Catriona* and published only a few days before, were quoted with approval. Referring to Scott's vain dream of a race of princely heirs dispensing the hospitalities of Abbotsford, the poet says:

> 'Fate spurned his wish, but promised in amends,
> One mighty scion of his heart and mind:
> And where far isles the languid ocean fleck,—
> Flying the cold kiss of our northern wind
> Lo, the rare spirit through whom we hail as friends
> The immortal Highland maid and Alan Breck!'

The highest praise was given to Stevenson's completed work in essays, romances, and poems; but through all ran the lament that a genius so fine should have been struck down in his forty-fourth year, when the cunning of his hand was at its best, and when it seemed that the richest wine from his vintage was still to flow.

The circumstances of his death suited well the element of romance that was so distinctly present in his life and character. From the first, lung disease seemed to have marked him for its prey. But the brave heart had not flinched or grown morbid. So far was this from being the case, one of his principal charms was a boyish animation and a gay light-hearted hopefulness. It would seem, however, that towards the end he had begun to fear a lingering death. In one of his last letters addressed to his friend, Mr Andrew Lang, he had expressed his dread lest such a paralysis of mental power and slow decay as that of Swift should be his fate. From this, therefore, he was happily delivered. Surrounded by wife and mother and other kind relatives and friends, he had all that loving attention could give and none of the pangs either of dying or of separation. According to instructions left by himself, he was buried on the following day, at the top of Vaea, a mountain 1300 feet high, close to his house, and overlooking the broad waters of the Pacific. The years spent in this beautiful and romantic island home were doubtless years rescued from death, and we cannot but feel grateful that the gentle Tusitala, 'the teller of tales,' as the natives in their great love called him, had the happiness and inspiration which these years had brought.

His early paper, *Ordered South* (1874), published in *Macmillan's Magazine*, is significant of the circumstances that led to his expatriation from home. The

fruits of these circumstances are also to be seen in *An Inland Voyage* (1878), his charming *Picturesque Notes on Edinburgh* of the same year, and *Travels with a Donkey in the Cevennes* (1879), all of them touched with the fine qualities of Stevenson's genius. His best essays followed in the volumes entitled *Virginibus Puerisque* (1881), *Familiar Studies of Men and Books* (1882), and a series of papers that appeared between 1882 and 1887, and were reprinted under the title of *Memories and Portraits*. The charm of these essays is due not only to the singular beauty of their style, but also to the freshness of their thoughts, their glow of romantic feeling, and, not least, the frequent glimpses they afford of the always interesting and delightful personality of the writer himself.

In 1882, he broke fresh ground in *The New Arabian Nights*, but notwithstanding the gruesome vividness of *The Suicide Club* and other tales, scarcely gave proof of that mastery of romantic fiction he was to reveal in *Treasure Island*, published in the same year. In the composition of this work, Stevenson had probably not taken himself very seriously, and he was perhaps as much surprised as any one at the wonderful popularity it achieved. It was a boy's book, but there was no limit to the ages of the boys who were both thrilled and horrified by the tap, tap of blindman Pew's staff upon the road, and by the sleek atrocities of that most consummate villain, John Silver. *Prince Otto* followed in 1885, but was not so successful. There is

a strange, weird glamour in such shorter pieces as *Thrawn Janet* (1881), and *The Merry Men* (1882). One of his most signal successes was won in 1886 by the publication of *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. Mr Stevenson has written nothing that shows greater power than this gruesome little tale. Whether he intended it or not, it may be taken as an allegory of the dual nature that is to be found in every human being—something of the angel and something also of the devil. How often is society startled by the discovery that beneath the seemingly placid exterior of what appears to be an innocent and well-ordered life may lurk a very wild beast, that only bides some momentary slackening of the forces of moral control to break forth into excesses of impure and even murderous lawlessness. This is the psychological problem presented in these pages with a singular subtlety and impressiveness. Dr Jekyll, the famous London professor and physician, has the respect of all for his high qualities of head and heart. The beneficences, which his wealth permits, and to which his generosity inclines him, are the theme of many tongues. Yet all the while he is only half known; his is a life within a life. His best friends would not recognise him in that secret world which he frequents, and in which he succumbs to the baser passions of his nature. And so a greater temptation comes to him. He discovers a drug which has the power of effecting a physical transformation so complete that recognition by the dearest friend becomes impossible. Identity

indeed remains, but to all outward seeming this is another man. Here then are boundless opportunities for the gratification of all the baser appetites and passions without the risk of imperilling a most valuable reputation. A single draught of this secret decoction, and the tall, handsome, winning, supremely respectable, and rather elderly Dr Jekyll is transformed into the dwarfish, misshapen, evil-looking, though younger, Edward Hyde. And all that servants, friends, and society know is that the great Dr Jekyll temporarily disappears from his usual haunts, as may well be with a man of his professional eminence. But the outer transformation is accompanied by a psychological change far more tremendous. For Hyde is pure evil, without a gleam of good—selfish, cruel, lustful to the last degree. No good and honest man can find himself in company with him without a shudder of repulsion. Moreover, in his frequent transformations, that occurs which might have been expected. The evil nature so often given way to becomes more and more vigorous and insistent, as the better nature retires more and more into the background, until at last, without any use of drug, without any effort even of will, and at the most awkward and most unexpected moments, the change comes, and Jekyll is threatened with overwhelming and ruinous exposure. For Hyde has perpetrated a cruel and unprovoked murder, and all London has been searched for him. At length Jekyll sees that in suicide only is escape possible from a life that has become more terrible than death, not so

much from the fear of the gallows, as from fear and hatred of his own double—Edward Hyde.

The same year (1886) witnessed the publication of *Kidnapped*, another of Stevenson's great successes. It now appears as Part I. of *The Adventures of David Balfour*. There are many who consider it his finest work. It is full of life and energy. It touches local scenery, such as the wild moor of Rannoch, the slopes of Appin blazing in the sunlight, or the drearier landscape of the lonely House of the Shaws, with a fine art and sympathy. The skill of a master is even more to be seen in the delineation of the two characters with whose fortunes the story is chiefly concerned—the stiff, dour, but brave and manly, Lowland youth, David Balfour, and the inimitable Jacobite Highlander, Alan Breck Stewart, conceited and faithful, brave and belligerent. There are some ever-memorable scenes, such as the fight of the Round House on board the brig *Covenant*, and the quarrel and pipe contest between Alan Breck and Robin Oig. Some may think there is too much of hacking and slaying, but what cannot be forgiven for the sake of the boyish freshness, the glow, the energy, the sweet, strong atmosphere that make it from beginning to end alive and enthralling?

Catriona (1893) now forms Part II. of *The Adventures of David Balfour*, and shows us better what possibilities of heroic courage and self-repression may lurk beneath the dull outward presentment of such a character as that of David. Alan Breck is also here,

but fills less of the canvas than formerly. Much space is given to the equivocal doings of James More Macgregor, the eldest son of Rob Roy, and father of Catriona. In this tale, which contains some of its author's finest and most artistic work, Stevenson for the first time prominently introduces the feminine element, and with more success than had been anticipated. Catriona herself is a fine study, but yields in interest, as many will think, to the arch, witty, leal-hearted Barbara Grant, the advocate's daughter, who is only too soon withdrawn from the reader's view. Some of the individual scenes, especially those in which David and Catriona are concerned in Holland, are remarkable for their beauty, subtlety, and pathos.

The Black Arrow (1888), a tale of old English life in the time of the Roses, failed to awaken the interest of the public as it had also failed to secure the approval of Mr Stevenson's 'fireside critic,' whom he so genially mentions in his dedication. *The Master of Ballantrae* (1889) reaches a higher level, and everywhere shows the writer's familiarity with eighteenth century life and manners. Its theme is the hatred of two brothers, beginning at Ballantrae in southern Scotland, and ending in the wild American forest, with the wan moon shedding its pale reflection over the dead forms of both brothers. How painful it all is! And how oppressive is that monotonously grey landscape throughout! The few characters, especially 'The Master,' are drawn with great sharpness and force, but they do not attract us. We are glad to be

rid of their company, and breathe more freely when the book is closed. Moreover, the incidents are not altogether beyond cavil. For surely the ghastly attempt to revive the buried Master—buried alive—after he has lain uncoffined for a week in the grave, is too unnatural to be consistent with the canons of good art.

Some of Stevenson's work it is not easy to appraise, because it has been written in collaboration with others.—*The Dynamiter* (1885) with Mrs Stevenson, his wife; *The Wrecker* (1892) and *The Ebb Tide* (1894) to some small extent, with his step-son, Mr Lloyd Osbourne; and Three Plays, with Mr W. E. Henley. Interesting personal experiences of Stevenson are to be found in *The Amateur Emigrant* and *Across the Plains*, written in 1883; the first, describing his own observations and adventures as a second class passenger on an American liner; and the second, his subsequent journey across the States, in a condition of health that scarcely permitted his friends to expect ever to see him again. He survived, however, and found a wife in California. *The Silverado Squatters* (1883) is a record of strange personal experiences in the great Western State. From the chapter of this book, entitled 'The Scot Abroad,' we learn how, amidst all his wanderings, Stevenson's heart still clung with all the tenacity of a Scot to his native land. Speaking of it he says: 'Of all mysteries of the human heart this is perhaps the most inscrutable. There is no special loveliness in that grey country, with its rainy

sea-beat archipelago; its fields of dark mountains; its unsightly places, black with coal; its treeless, sour, unfriendly-looking corn-lands; its quaint, grey, castled city, where the bells clash of a Sunday, and the wind squalls, and the salt showers fly and beat. I do not even know if I desire to live there; but let me hear in some far land, a kindred voice sing out, "O, why left I my hame?" and it seems at once as if no beauty under the kind heavens, and no society of the wise and good, can repay me for my absence from my country. And though I think I would rather die elsewhere, yet in my heart of hearts I long to be buried among good Scots clods. I will say it fairly, it grows on me with every year: there are no stars so lovely as Edinburgh street-lamps. When I forget thee, Auld Reekie, may my right hand forget its cunning!'

The same pathetic yearning enters into almost his latest poem, addressed to S. R. Crockett on receiving the Dedication of *The Stickit Minister*.

'Be it granted me to behold you again in dying,
Hills of home! and to hear again the call;
Hear about the graves of the martyrs the peewees crying,
And hear no more at all.'

The wish was not fulfilled. And now we learn from the publication of *Weir of Hermiston*, an unfinished tale on which Stevenson was engaged when he died, how close the scenes of home lay to his heart to the very last. It is marvellous how true is the home accent in this fragment of a Scottish tale, and how

easily and naturally the writer takes his stand once more in the windy streets of the ancient capital by the Forth, and on the sweet and fresh hill-sides that surround it. It would seem as if his many years of exile, the glow, the luxuriance, the glamour and gracious kindliness of life amidst the far Pacific seas had all been clean forgotten. In *The Wreckers*, *The Ebb-Tide*, *The Island Nights' Entertainment*, and other tales, he had shown how powerful was the spell they had cast upon his genius. But now when a supreme effort is to be put forth in the production of what promises to be his greatest work, he is the true Scot again; and he will doubtless remain the representative Scot of literature for the whole period, from the publication of *Treasure Island* to his death.

It is the general opinion that Stevenson has written nothing stronger than *Weir of Hermiston*, not merely because, to use an expression of his own, 'it is drowned in Scotland,' but because of the vigour with which the gruesome story is outlined, and the power with which its principal characters are set before us. Not the half of it has been told, yet there is enough to show that the author's imagination was never more powerful and active, his mastery of style never more assured and exquisite, his confidence of success never more reasonable, than when on the morning of the last day of his life he dictated what were destined to be the concluding passages of this tale. The great achievement of this fragment is Weir of Hermiston himself, the Lord Justice-Clerk. For this character Mr Stevenson has

had recourse to the well-known Lord Braxfield 'the hanging judge,' of whose coarseness and severity so many stories have been told. But Weir is a far more subtly conceived personage, for with all his sternness and brutality, and actual pleasure in the conviction of the unhappy criminals brought before him, there is suggested something else. The reader cannot quite hate him, but feels instinctively that another side of his character is yet to be revealed, and waits. There is much to marvel at in his strong and clear intelligence, the extent of his legal knowledge, his honesty as a man, and his integrity as a judge. In the differences that arise between him and his powerfully contrasted son Archie, the reader is perhaps less disposed to side with the son than probably he feels he ought to be, even in view of that tremendous situation which unhappily the story never reaches, but which it is avowedly leading up to—the trial on a charge of murder and the sentence to death of Archie Weir by his father, at the cost of the father's own life.

In the elder of the two Kirsties Stevenson has drawn an admirable character — one of the privileged, faithful, and now almost extinct race of Scottish female servants—worthy almost of Scott himself. The Two Black Brothers of Cauldstaneslap are also powerfully imagined and described, and for them much stirring work had evidently been marked out. Altogether there were here the materials for a tale more powerful than any Mr Stevenson had yet written, and

regret is inevitable that the hand that had so skilfully begun this tale was not permitted to complete it.

St Ives (1897), another posthumous and incomplete story, relates, with Stevenson's usual graces of style, the adventures of a French prisoner who makes his escape from the Castle of Edinburgh, but it cannot be regarded as one of his greatest works.

Stanley J. Weyman (1855) was born at Ludlow, in Shropshire, in 1855. He was educated first at Shrewsbury School, and then at Christ's Church, Oxford. Having been called to the bar in 1881, he practised for eight years on the Oxford Circuit, but with indifferent success. Partly on that account, and partly on account of bad health, he abandoned the profession of the law, and devoted all his energies to literature.

No one has done better service than Mr Weyman in connection with the return of the Victorian novel to the romantic method. It was by *The House of the Wolf*, in 1889, that he first struck the note which has since become so familiar under his touch. It did not at the time attract much notice, but is a stirring and vivid picture of life and character in France in the time of the Bartholomew. The story moves swiftly from point to point, and has a succession of thrilling incidents. Especial interest gathers round the personage known for his ferocity as the 'Wolf,' and a curious and delightful effect is produced by the art of the novelist in discovering for us, amidst the atro-

cities of the great massacre, that the 'Wolf' after all is human, and is even capable of noble generosity and self-sacrifice.

The New Rector, which followed in 1890, is in a different style, and deals cleverly with a trying situation in modern clerical life in England. It was followed in 1891 by *The Story of Francis Cludde*, a romance of the England and the Low Countries of the Sixteenth Century, when the gloom of Mary's fanaticism is weighing down the spirits of men with a dull oppression, when plots are much afoot, and when no one knows who is the spy and who the honest man. The hero of the tale, and certain great personages accidentally associated with him, are made to pass through a series of tremendous adventures. Again and again they narrowly escape death; and finally, when there seems no possibility of extrication from the meshes which fate has cast around them, there comes deliverance in the death of the ill-omened queen. It is all done with admirable art and spirit. Character is truthfully delineated, the manners of the time are faithfully displayed, but the narrative itself is never for a moment interrupted. We are carried on with a never-flagging interest from incident to incident, each more impressive and thrilling than another.

It is characteristic of Mr Weyman to find his heroes in personages of unpromising exterior and surroundings, to show the favourable play of circumstances upon them, and finally to present them clothed, if

not in immaculate graces, at least in very noble and attractive qualities. This is especially noticeable in *A Gentleman of France* (1893), a work of singular force and attractiveness. M. de Marsac, the hero of this fine tale, is a highly artistic study, scarcely unworthy, it has often been said, of the great Dumas himself, although it is not Dumas, but Robert Louis Stevenson that Mr Weyman claims as Master. De Marsac, it is true, is little better than an impecunious adventurer, almost as destitute of hope as he is of gold pieces. But he is an almost miraculous swordsman, knows not what fear means, is the very soul of honour, and is as unconscious as a child of the heroic qualities in himself that are manifest to every eye but his own. Adventures of the most marvellous kind meet him at every turn, and call forth from him the most wonderful proofs of daring and resource. Most of these have some relation to Mademoiselle de Vire, a haughty beauty, depicted with charming piquancy and force, both when in the earlier stages of their intercourse, she humiliates him with her scorn, and when at last she delicately reveals the love which he is both too modest and too proud to claim. Across the stage of this story moves a crowd of distinguished personages, all more or less interested in the plots and counterplots of the 'League'—Henri III, his cousin of Navarre, Turenne, Crebillon, and others.

Of scarcely inferior interest and power, though more limited in range, is *Under the Red Robe* (1894), the scene of which is laid in 1630, in the time of the

Great Cardinal. Gil de Berault, the hero of this story, is no less powerfully depicted than Sieur de Marsac, although he is on a lower moral plane. He is, in fact, a gambler and bully, who through his skill in swordsmanship has won a reputation as a duellist so sinister, that he is known throughout Paris as 'The Black Death.' The exercise of this questionable art brings him under the displeasure of Richelieu, who has issued an edict against duelling, but who saves his life on the condition that he shall accomplish the arrest of M. de Cocheforêt, a Bearnais gentleman and malcontent towards the Cardinal's government. To save his neck, de Berault consents, and in proceeding to the execution of his purpose has many exciting adventures, through all of which the better nature of the man is seen disentangling itself from baser elements, until at last, reinforced by his admiration of two noble women, and his deep love of one, he sets his prisoner free, and goes alone to Paris to meet his fate at the hands of Richelieu. Love, however, has been before him in the person of Mademoiselle de Cocheforêt, and amidst the anxieties and humiliations of the memorable 'Day of Dupes,' the great Cardinal has the satisfaction of doing one generous act in dismissing into happiness a brave man, reclaimed, as we are fain to hope and believe, by a woman's love to nobleness of life.

To the same year, 1894, belongs *The Man in Black*, a shorter and less pleasant tale, presenting only the seamy side of human nature, and concerning

itself mainly with the sinister doings of Solomon Nostradamus, an infamous astrologer and concocter of poisons, in the Paris of the time of the Great Cardinal.

This busy year, 1894, also produced *My Lady Rotha*, the scene of which is laid in Germany, in the troubled days of the Thirty Years' War. At first within the Schloss of the provincial town of Heritzburg, then in General Tzerclas' camp, and finally within beleaguered Nuremberg, with the great Swede and Wallenstein ready to fly at each other's throats, the incidents arrange themselves. These are as usual of a thrilling kind, and serve to keep alive the reader's attention to the last. The story is told by Martin Schwartz, the gigantic steward of Lady Rotha, a true gentleman, as faithful as he is brave. The high-spirited and capricious, but noble and tender-hearted Countess is ever in the foreground of the picture, and it is in the complication of her love affairs that the true motive of the story is to be found. In spirited delineation of character, as in the Countess and Tzerclas, in vivid and dramatic representation of scenes in the time of the Great War, and in the art with which simple human emotion is interwoven with deeds of direst cruelty and of loftiest daring, *My Lady Rotha* worthily sustains, if it does not add to, the reputation that was made by *A Gentleman of France*.

Following up his other successes, Mr Weyman in 1895 again invaded the romantic field of French

history, in a series of short stories entitled *From the Memoirs of a Minister of France.* They are told with the usual grace and simplicity, and are full of a romantic interest. They mainly set before us the great Henry in the closing period of his life, and the narrator himself, who is no other than Henry's ablest and most trusted minister, the grave, honest, resourceful Duc de Sully. Here is much concerning the difficulties and even the humiliations of statesmanship at that time. The squabbles, jealousies, and intrigues of the court are very much in evidence; while a sombre interest is lent to these tales by the perception that much of the gay *insouciance* of the monarch's earlier manner has now given place to fits of gloom and despondency, that are strangely prophetic of the fatal tragedy that was destined just two months after the memoirs close to end for ever the gay impulses and the far-reaching projects of France's greatest king.

In *The Red Cockade* (1896) France is still the subject—the France of the early days of the great Revolution. The Bastille has fallen, but the guillotine has not yet begun its deadly work. A few chateaux here and there have been burnt, but the people are bewildered and terrified, it would seem, at their own success. On the other hand, the nobles and the clergy are divided in their councils, always expect the king to do something that is not done, and in the vain waiting for a man and a policy, fall into a paralysis of fear and despair. The tale is told with spirit, and has

some fine character-drawing. Two of the portraits at least are of supreme merit—those of M. Froment of Nimes, and Madame de St Alais, with her magnificent courage, her scorn for the people, and the cruelty even to her own flesh and blood, which devotion to her order makes possible. M. Froment, outlined rather than worked out in detail, is a powerfully-conceived character. Here was the leader who, though not of their order, might, with a united nobility at his back, have stemmed the torrent that was devastating France. His noble failure is powerfully sketched, and there is something pathetic in the impression which that failure, added to his splendid courage, faith, and resourcefulness, leaves upon the mind.

Arthur Conan Doyle (1859). Conan Doyle, who was born at Edinburgh in 1859, perpetuates the interest of a name already famous for two generations in connection with the arts of political caricature and book illustration. After an education obtained partly in England and partly abroad, he graduated M.D. in the university of his native town. Thereafter he proceeded to London, where he commenced a practice; but finding success more tardy than he expected, he ultimately abandoned medicine for literature. This, however, was not done until he had assured himself of success in his new profession. Like Mr Weyman, Conan Doyle put forth his ventures in the Romantic School, and some of his best works have also helped to revive an interest in the historical novel. It is not,

however, in this field that his greatest popularity has been achieved.

After *A Study in Scarlet* (1888) came *Micah Clarke* (1889), a tale of the Monmouth rebellion, full of stirring incidents and vivid pictures of life and manners in southern England towards the end of the seventeenth century, and especially of the circumstances that led up to and followed the great collapse of Sedgemoor. *The Firm of Girdlestone* (1890) contains reminiscences of the author's student days in Edinburgh. *The Captain of the Polestar*, with other short tales, was followed by a work still more decisive of Doyle's position, *The White Company* (1891), a tale of the times of Edward, the Black Prince, as full as heart of man or boy could wish of deeds of hardihood and romantic chivalry, picturesquely and dramatically set forth. The character-drawing is excellent, Sir Nigel Loring, the Captain of the White Company, with his sweet and gracious courtliness but lion-like prowess; his gentle, monk-trained squire, Alleyne Edricson; Sam Aylward, the bluff, soft-hearted bowman; the red-headed giant, Hordle John; the Black Prince himself and Don Pedro—all are drawn with great vigour, and stand out with sharp-cut clearness from a page that is never wanting in life and interest. Another novel of the same class, *The Refugees*, followed in 1893. In this the reader is again carried to France, but now it is the time of the Grand Monarque, and we find ourselves involved in the endless Court intrigues and heart-searchings of Versailles at the

critical moment when the star of Montespan is paling to its eclipse before that of Madame de Maintenon. *The Refugees* is full of exciting incidents, conceived in the true spirit of romance, and when these reach their climax in France, the principal characters are transferred to the wilds of Canada, not, however, without considerable loss of interest and artistic congruity. But for one reader that knows Conan Doyle by such works as these, there are probably twenty who know him as the author of *The Adventures* (1892), and *The Memoirs* (1893) *of Sherlock Holmes*. With these two series of detective stories Dr Doyle has achieved one of the most remarkable successes of our time, not only by the skill with which interest is sustained throughout, but also by the dramatic force with which their principal character is conceived. The writer has told us that he drew this character from the life in the person of Dr Joseph Bell of Edinburgh. None the less do we feel that in Sherlock Holmes he has added a distinct and original creation to English literature. In *A Study in Scarlet* and *The Sign of Four*, the wonderful astuteness of Sherlock Holmes is also the subject. *The Doings of Raffles Haw* (1892), a short but excellent piece of work, again shows the writer's clever handling of a mystery.

Dr Doyle has more than sustained his reputation by such recent work as *The Stark-Munro Letters* (1895) and *Brigadier Gerard* (1895). Many indeed will prefer the latter even to the Sherlock Holmes books for its lifelike and amusing delineation of the delightfully

naive and unconscious vanity of one of the bravest of the great Napoleon's officers. *Rodney Stone* (1897) is a clever study of English society life and manners under the Regency, when George III. was king.

In all his work Conan Doyle shows himself to be a deft and capable craftsman. His art is pre-eminently that of the story-teller. A sure instinct enables him to escape the temptation to dulness. There may be little that is piquant or brilliant in his style. He touches no deep chords of human feeling. But there can be no doubt as to his power of handling a plot, or his success in recounting a stirring and vivid tale.

Anthony Hope is the literary name of Mr A. H. Hawkins (1863), on whom a very few years have sufficed to bestow an extraordinary popularity as a writer of social, and especially of romantic fiction of the adventure kind. In works of the former class such as the clever *Dolly Dialogues* and *The Comedies of Courtship*, he has revealed a peculiar grace and deftness of touch, and in particular a command of easy, brilliant, well-bred conversation that have a distinct charm. But turning from the conventional forms of modern society life, he was happily led to seek a subject farther afield, in the crux of a strongly dramatic situation, producing the most astounding adventures, and calling forth the most remarkable qualities of courage and resource in his characters. Sometimes the incidents might seem to border upon the impossible, but they were rendered with such verve and animation that the

reader could not help being carried along breathlessly to the close.

Mr Hawkins did not all at once discover this vein within himself. *The Prisoner of Zenda* (1894), which may be said to have made his reputation, was the first, as it is still in the opinion of many the best, example among his works of this kind of writing. The very remarkable incidents of this story were conceived with such a vividness, and the narrative was sustained with such a brilliancy that no flagging of interest, once the book was taken up, was possible. Since then he has produced various other works conceived in the same manner, such as *Count Antonio* (1895) and *Phroso* (1897). Of his later works may also be mentioned *The God in the Car* (1894) and *The Heart of the Princess Osra* (1896).

Anthony Hope had the usual literary discouragements, for his first novel, *A Man of Mark*, published in 1890, was but little noticed. He did not, however, lose heart, for in due course appeared *Father Stafford*, *Mr Witt's Widow*, and *Almost a Hero*, all of them showing excellent work, but none of them giving any promise of the stupendous success that was soon to come with *The Prisoner of Zenda*.

Mr Hawkins, who is the son of the Rev. E. C. Hawkins, Vicar of St Bride's, Fleet Street, London, is Scholar of Balliol, and a Barrister of the Middle Temple. In 1894 he gave up his practice as a lawyer, and has since devoted himself entirely to literary pursuits.

Henry Rider Haggard (1856), who has ministered so largely to the pleasure of younger readers during the last decade of the Victorian era, resides at Ditchingham House, Norfolk. He spent some of the years of his early manhood in South Africa, where he held the position of Secretary to the Governor of Natal, and afterwards served on the staff of Sir Theophilus Shepstone, H.M. Special Commissioner to the Transvaal in 1876-77. Like many others, Mr Haggard was deeply dissatisfied with the action of the British Government in restoring the Transvaal to the Boers after the affair of Majuba Hill, and throwing up his interests in that country he returned to England. His first book, *Cetewayo and his White Neighbours* (1882), was therefore a narrative of events of which he was fully informed, and of which he might almost be said to have been an eye-witness. *Dawn*, his first novel, appeared in 1884, and was followed by *The Witch's Head* (1885); but it was *King Solomon's Mines* (1886) that really made his reputation. He has followed up this success by a number of other tales on similar lines, such as *She*, *Allan Quatermain*, *Jess*, *Colonel Quaritch*, *Cleopatra*, *Eric Bright-Eyes*, *Nada, the Lily*, *Montezuma's Daughter*, *The People of the Mist*, and *The Heart of the World* (1895).

It is easy to find fault with these tales, which certainly make heavy demands upon the faith of the reader, which too often also show a style that is pretentious and overdone, and which, above all, seem to hold human life too cheap. On the other

hand, Mr Haggard has the art of the true story-teller, and if he fails to put into these tales any element of subtle emotion, he enchains to the last the attention of such readers as are capable of enjoying works of this class. More recently he has in *Joan Haste* (1895) tried his hand on a subject of a more familiar and conventional type, but with indifferent success.

Rudyard Kipling (1864) is an author of many editions and an almost world-wide audience. Those who admire him will not allow him to be spoken of except in terms of extravagant praise. They see in Kipling the most noteworthy specimen of the end of the century Victorian literature, both in prose and verse. This, they will say, is real; this is a literature that penetrates beneath all surface coverings and conventionalities right down to the primal roots of things. Here is life itself, undraped and unsophisticated, drinking from the very fountains of being, and in eternal harmony with the great tragi-comedy in which material forms are ever struggling to become articulate. Never, perhaps, has the mystery of material India, with its swarming millions, its vast spaces, its oppressive silences, its sweltering heats, and its nightmare horrors, been more powerfully and poetically conceived. Whether, however, such writing in its strong intellectual appeal rests on a sufficient basis of careful and accurate observation, and is not rather the result of a powerful imagination working up into new and strange com-

binations the meagre gleanings of personal knowledge and reflection, may be open to question. It is something in favour of this writer that so acute a critic as Mrs Oliphant, just deceased, is said to have greatly esteemed Mr Kipling's works, while, strange to say, she never liked Stevenson's. Most will feel that the power in Kipling is superabundant, but very many will doubt if it has yet found for itself forms of expression that are likely to put the seal of permanency upon his work.

Rudyard Kipling was born in Bombay in 1864. After an education obtained in North Devon, he returned to India in 1882, to assist in editing the *Civil and Military Gazette and Pioneer.* It was during a journalistic experience extending over the next seven years that he began to publish the characteristic poems, tales, and sketches illustrative of native, military, and jungle life in India for which he has become so extensively known. He soon attracted attention. This, however, was work of too much strength and originality to be altogether free from fault, especially in so young a man. Some of it no doubt reached a high level of conception and of execution. It had, and in abundance, humour, pathos, imagination, and both dramatic and descriptive power. But it also had the faults that too often accompany such gifts. The flashes of genius were more noticeable than a sense of art. Mr Kipling's manner showed a frequent want of restraint, and its strong and vivid realism was too apt to degenerate

into violence and coarseness. There were passages and even whole stories that no amount of power could render other than repulsive to the ordinary reader. His best known prose works are *Soldiers Three*, *The Light that Failed*, *Life's Handicap*, *Many Inventions*, and the *Jungle Books*. In verse, his *Barrack-Room Ballads* (1892) and *The Seven Seas* (1896) are done with an extraordinary spirit and energy, but scarcely rise into the region of true poetry.

James Matthew Barrie (1860). The novel has in many recent cases added to its other qualities the charms of dialect and local colour, the effect of which has been a peculiar blending of humour and pathos, and a tender quaintness. It is perhaps natural that in this new departure the chief honours should have fallen to the countrymen of Scott. Not only does the 'guid braid Scots' lend itself to quaint, picturesque, and pathetic treatment, but there is also a something that does so in the sturdily independent Scottish character itself, with its depth of tenderness and of humour, its reserves of speech and of enthusiasm, its romantic and chivalrous devotion to ancient causes, its grave intelligence, and its familiarity with things unseen. Already considerable reputations have been won by some of our younger writers in dealing with subjects of this class. It remains, however, to be seen what more they have to give, and if it is only within this comparatively narrow and provincial sphere that

they have gifts to exercise. Some of them, such as J. M. Barrie, S. R. Crockett, and Ian Maclaren, have already produced works of sterling quality, and will, no doubt, live among our classics.

Mr J. M. Barrie in *Auld Licht Idylls* (1888), *A Window in Thrums* (1889) and *The Little Minister* (1891), has set himself to illustrate the quaint oddities of character, the curious blending of humour and pathos, the pettiness, the heroisms, and the fine and full humanity of life in the small provincial town of Kirriemuir in Forfarshire, where he himself was born. Under the name of 'Thrums' we know it almost as well as we know our own birthplace; and as for Jess and Leeby, Hendry and Tammas, Gavin Ogilvy and the Little Minister, and many other characters besides, are they not familiar to us as people we ourselves have laughed and sorrowed with? It is in *A Window in Thrums* that Mr Barrie has reached high-water mark, and there are passages in this work, both humorous and pathetic, so full of a very fine genius that it would be almost impossible to beat them.

Mr Barrie has broken other ground in *When a Man's Single* (1888), and *My Lady Nicotine* (1890), but we miss in these a something that only seems to come to him with the atmosphere of Thrums. His latest tale, *Sentimental Tommy* (1896), after opening in the east of London, speedily transfers itself to Thrums, the scene of his former triumphs, and sets before us the remarkable sayings and doings of a company of children all more or less dominated by

the genius of the child hero of the story. Tommy's hunger for poignant and untried emotions, his vivid imagination, his vanity, his selfishness, his masterfulness, and his absolute unconsciousness of what truthfulness means, are all displayed with much analytical power. It is evident that Mr Barrie scorns this character, just as Mr Thackeray scorned his own Becky. Evidently he has here prepared the way for a subsequent work in which Tommy, grown into manhood, will exercise a baleful influence, and will have to account for the evil consequences to others of these dangerous gifts and vices. *Sentimental Tommy*, though mainly occupied with the children, has glimpses of an adult tragic interest in the opening chapters, and more than a glimpse of idyllic beauty, reminding of *Cranford*, in depicting the gentleness and middle-aged loves of Miss Ailie and Miss Kitty.

Still more recently Mr Barrie has published a remarkable sketch of his mother, entitled *Margaret Ogilvy* (1896). Some have thought that such a book should never have been written. They are of opinion that Mr Barrie in thus exposing to the public gaze the innermost heart and life of a mother has desecrated the sanctities of home. However that may be, no one can be insensible to the subtle charm of this book —its beauty and tenderness, its humour, its pathos, and the fine bloom of its sentiment. It makes clearer what was well known before that towards the intellectual genesis of Mr Barrie, and even of the works by which his genius has expressed itself, his mother was

no inconsiderable factor. It is possible that when Mr Barrie's other works are all forgotten, this sketch of his mother may still survive as one of the treasures of literature.

Born at Kirriemuir in 1860, Mr Barrie is still young, and has, it may be hoped, a long and brilliant future before him. He was educated at Dumfries Academy, and graduated M.A. at Edinburgh University in 1882. Reminiscences of his college course are to be found in his bright little book, *An Edinburgh Eleven*, which contained, along with others, sketches of Robert Louis Stevenson, Professors Blackie and Tait, Calderwood and Masson, but which, notwithstanding its cleverness and humour, was, to those who knew the subjects, a little too highly coloured to be quite satisfactory. From Edinburgh, Mr Barrie drifted first to Nottingham and then to London, where his characteristic sketches appearing in the *British Weekly*, *St James's Gazette*, and other journals, soon attracted attention.

More recently he has made some happy hits with the drama in *Walker—London*, and *The Professor's Love Story*.

Samuel Rutherford Crockett (1859). In 1893 *The Stickit Minister and some Common Men* diverted attention to a writer who, like Mr Barrie, following in the footsteps of Galt, has set himself to illustrate the lights and shadows of Scottish life, and who also has made liberal use of local colouring and the homely vernacular. Some of these sketches are humorous and

pathetic in a high degree. The book was dedicated to Robert Louis Stevenson, who, writing of it to a friend, says: '*The Stickit Minister* and *The Heather Lintie* are two that come near to me particularly. They are drowned in Scotland. They have refreshed me like a visit home.' *The Stickit Minister* was warmly received, and quickly passed through several editions. Curiosity as to what its author would do next had not long to wait; for in 1894 four other works from Mr Crockett's pen were in the hands of the public. The best of these, *The Raiders*, has the strong breath of the Galloway moors and of the Solway blowing through it. It is of the time of the early Georges, and tells of the wild doings of smugglers and of gipsies. There are stirring fights by sea and land. The clank and jingle of the stout nags as they dash along the south-land roads with their kegs of brandy and iron-lined boxes of precious lace, are in our ears. In the silence of the night we hear the lowing of the great cattle droves as they are being driven by the raiders along the moorland tracks to the outlaw fastnesses among the hills. The interest of the story is well sustained by a series of hairbreadth escapes and perilous adventures. Probably Stevenson's *Kidnapped* was not a little in the author's mind as he wrote, for the many adventures of Patrick Heron and Silver Sand are wonderfully suggestive of David Balfour and Alan Breck. But of the originality of the work there can be no doubt. *The Raiders* has many quaint and humorous touches, but it is not without its pathos

also. Indeed, the most distinct note of genius to be found in it is the touching tale told by Silver Sand to Patrick when they are shut up in the Aughty Cave during the great snowstorm, of how he carried the body of poor little dead Willie to his mother, and thereby ceased to be one of Lag's godless troopers, and became that strange thing—a gipsy Cameronian. The women characters are all touched with insight and grace, especially Eppie Tamson and May Mischief, the heroine of the story. But, after all, the strong feature of this tale is not the vividness and reality of its characters, but the sense of freshness and exhilaration from outdoor life and adventure which its every page conveys.

Following these decided successes came *The Lilac Sunbonnet* (1894), a love story, of merit inferior to that of its predecessors, although of all Mr Crockett's books it is said to have had the largest circulation. Two other works mark this prolific year, *The Mad Sir Uchtred* and *The Playactress*, both short stories, the former dealing with the period of 'the killing time,' and the latter breaking for this writer new ground, by carrying him, somewhat belated, into the *terra incognita* of London theatrical life. A book of short tales, chiefly concerning Galloway, entitled *Bog-Myrtle and Peat*, next appeared. It is of unequal workmanship, although throughout quite characteristic of the author.

In 1895 appeared *The Men of the Moss-Hags*, a more ambitious effort, in which are to be seen all the breezy, open-air effects which this author has taught

us to expect. His presentation of the stern, rugged men and winsome ladies of the Covenant is picturesque and striking. The battle episodes are rendered with great fire and enthusiasm. He had here a subject peculiarly congenial, and if in seeming to challenge comparison with *Old Mortality* he does not altogether succeed, at least he has accomplished a very difficult task with no little credit.

The rapidity of Mr Crockett's production is such that it is hard to keep pace with him. In 1896 he produced *Cleg Kelly*, the story of a city Arab ; and in the same year he returned to the manner of *The Raiders* in *The Grey Man*, in which he describes in a number of thrilling and romantic episodes occurring in the south-west of Scotland, the fierceness of manners that prevailed when the Scottish Solomon was king. It is full of adventure ; too full, some may think, of deeds of blood and violence. There are even moments when its horrors make the reader's gorge rise. On the other hand, there is much to relieve these horrors in the play of wholesome humour, in the sweet human loves, and in that ever-present delight in nature that has such an unfailing charm in this writer—qualities, however, which are here and there marred by a painful and perfectly needless coarseness of expression.

Mr Crockett was born in 1859, amid the scenes he has so well described, on the small farm of Duchrae, near New Galloway Station. Some years later the family removed to Castle Douglas, where young

Crockett was first pupil and then teacher in the Free Church Institution of that town. His subsequent studies at the Edinburgh University were followed by a residence abroad in the capacity of tutor. Having returned and completed his theological course, he became the Free Church Minister of Penicuik, a village a few miles to the south of Edinburgh, a position which he resigned in 1895 in order to devote himself wholly to literature.

Mr Crockett's earliest literary efforts took the form of verse, which appeared in 1886 under the title of *Dulce Cor*, but attracted no attention. He is still young ; is, moreover, a man of powerful physique, and combining, as he does, habits of industry with undoubted ability, may reasonably be expected to give a good account of himself in the years to come. His danger is in writing too much, from which cause he has already in some degree suffered.

Ian Maclaren (1850) is the pen name of the Rev. John Watson, D.D., of Sefton Park Presbyterian Church, Liverpool. Although of Highland blood on both sides, this representative Scotsman was actually born at Manningtree, Essex. This mistake, however, was partially rectified soon after by the removal of the family to Scotland. He passed through the classes of Edinburgh University at the same time as Robert Louis Stevenson, but had no personal acquaintance with him. He relates the interesting fact, however, that on the rare occasions, when the latter put in an

appearance in his classes, the students used to signalise the event by giving him a round of applause. Among Mr Watson's other fellow students, either at the University or New College (Free Church), were Dr Murray of the *Challenger* Expedition, Dr Stalker, and Professors Seth, Sorley, Drummond, Elmslie, and G. A. Smith. He also studied for a time at Tübingen.

After receiving license as a minister of the Free Church of Scotland, Mr Watson's first full charge was Logiealmond in Perthshire, which he has since made famous to all the English-speaking world under the name of 'Drumtochty.' He left it to become colleague to the Rev. Dr Millar of Free St Matthew's, Glasgow; and in 1880 he accepted a call to his present charge, where for the last fifteen years he has laboured in a useful and highly appreciated ministry.

His very remarkable success as a writer has been won by a series of sketches of Scottish life and character as seen in the remote parish of Drumtochty. These sketches first appeared in the pages of the *British Weekly*, which had also first called attention to Mr Barrie and Mr Crockett; and it is to this bright and clever journal that we are indebted for most of these facts respecting Ian Maclaren.

When in 1894 his sketches appeared in book form as *Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush*, they attracted very wide attention. They are in no sense mere imitations of the two writers just referred to, his undoubted fore-

runners in this field; they everywhere show the original power and independence of their author. In the keenness of his observation, in the instinct for discerning subtleties of character in humble peasant life, in his genial humour, in the width and gentleness of his toleration, and especially in his pathos, a quality of quite unusual depth in Ian Maclaren, we find an author of fine gifts, both of mind and heart, who fully deserves the reputation this work has won for him. If he had done nothing more than create Dr M'Clure the general practitioner of Drumtochty, who with something of heroic consecration has given himself to a life of unceasing toil, self-sacrifice, and modest hiding of great professional gifts, in the service of the undemonstrative inhabitants of the Glen, we should feel that a something had been added to literature that must needs make the world sweeter and better than it was before. There is nothing cynical in these pictures of homely Scottish life; a warmth of human heart, and a soft, though rugged tenderness are in them all.

In a second series, *The Days of Auld Langsyne* (1895), Ian Maclaren has returned to Drumtochty, and the reader is as much as before impressed with the inwardness of the author's knowledge of Scottish character. May we not say that the continued popularity of these sketches, even outside of Scotland, is proof that they are human even more than they are Scotch? Their realism cannot fail to come home to the reader, and we have difficulty, therefore, in

believing what the author has told us, that not one character in these books has been drawn from the life. We must suppose that they are real because they are true to the universal facts of human nature. For idyllic beauty of conception, quaintness of humour, and poignancy of pathos, 'Drumsheugh's Love Story,' 'A Case of Conscience,' and 'A Triumph of Diplomacy' in the later book are almost equal to anything in *Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush.*

His latest work in fiction, *Kate Carnegie and those Ministers* (1896), seemed at first to promise the larger interest of a continuous story; but whatever the author's intention may have been, it resolved itself once again into a book of sketches drawn in the neighbourhood of Drumtochty. Hitherto Ian Maclaren has not shown any of the constructive talent required for the devising and the proper handling of a plot, but, on the other hand, he has seldom produced better work than the 'Rabbi' Saunderson of this story, which, if it contained nothing more than this quaint and touching portrait, would still be entitled to be regarded as a work of unusual interest and value.

Other Novelists.—It was as a writer of humorous and spirited sea stories, that **Captain Frederick Marryat (1792-1848)** won his reputation. The best of them, such as *Peter Simple*, *Mr Midshipman Easy*, and *Jacob Faithful*, had been written before the

present reign began; but until his death in 1848 he continued to produce largely. Some of his later tales, such as *The Phantom Ship*, *Poor Jack*, and *Masterman Ready*, are scarcely, if at all, inferior to the best things he had already done. Of living authors, **William Clark Russell (1844)** is the true successor of Marryat, and may even be said to excel the older writer in the power with which he has described the cruel mystery of the sea, its dangers, and the crimes and superstitions of the men who do business upon it. For seven or eight years he had himself trod the deck, and was able, therefore, to put into his first sea story, *The Wreck of the Grosvenor*, which made his reputation, that air of reality which personal knowledge only can give. Many other nautical tales have followed, and it is upon these that this writer's reputation rests. **Francis Edward Smedley (1819-1864)** relieved a comparatively short life of bad health and physical suffering by writing such bright and humorous tales as *Frank Fairleigh*, *Lewis Arundel*, and *Harry Coverdale's Courtship*. **Mrs Elizabeth Lynn Linton (1822)**, the author of *John Davidson*, *Patricia Kemball*, *The Atonement of Leam Dundas*, and *Dulcie Everton* (1896), also wrote a series of clever papers which attracted much attention in the pages of *The Saturday Review*, under the title of *The Girl of the Period*. **Dinah Maria Mulock (1826-1887)**, also known as Mrs Craik, deserves mention for her fine novel, *John Halifax, Gentleman*. She also wrote *A Life for a Life*, *Mistress and Maid*, and

many other tales. **James Hannay (1827-1873)** gave much of his time to journalism, was for some time editor of the *Edinburgh Courant*, but found opportunity to produce various works in fiction, the best of which are *Singleton Fontenoy* and *Eustace Conyers*. **George Alfred Lawrence (1827-1876)** wrote *Guy Livingstone*, *Sword and Gown*, and other tales, very popular in their day. **Henry Kingsley (1830-1876)**, the younger brother of Charles Kingsley, wrote *Ravenshoe*, his best story, *Geoffrey Hamlin*, and many others, with not a little of his brother's verve and enthusiasm. **James Payn (1830)**, having received his education at Eton and Trinity College, Cambridge, began a long and honourable career in literature early in the fifties by publishing certain volumes of verse, and by contributing articles to the *Westminster Review* and *Household Words*. In 1858 he became editor of *Chambers's Journal*, in which appeared his first novel, *A Family Scapegrace*, followed by *Lost Sir Massingberd*, the success of which was so great that it is said to have added 20,000 to the circulation of the *Journal*. In 1882 Mr Payn succeeded Mr Leslie Stephen as editor of *The Cornhill Magazine*, the chair of which he only vacated in 1896. Since 1888 his bright and humorous *Notes* have been a feature of *The Illustrated London News*. More than a hundred books, chiefly novels, have come from the pen of this much-loved, much-suffering, highly-equipped author, in whom are to be found, besides the best qualities of the

novelist, a peculiarly quaint and subtle humour, and a genial humanity. **Justin M'Carthy (1830),** in addition to *A History of our Own Times* and a *History of the Four Georges*, has done much journalistic work, besides writing a number of popular novels, such as *The Waterdale Neighbours*, *A Fair Saxon*, *Dear Lady Disdain*, and *The Dictator*. **S. Baring-Gould (1834),** a country gentleman of an ancient family, and Rector of Lew-Trenchard, Devon, has since 1854 produced many books of an historical, antiquarian, and religious interest. More recently he has given himself to works in fiction, among the best of which are *Mehalah* and *John Herring*. He is strong in local colour, and in depicting with a grim and powerful realism the less attractive phases of human life and character. Mrs Maxwell, better known as **Miss Braddon (1837),** first made her reputation with *Lady Audley's Secret* in 1862. It was followed by *Aurora Floyd*, and since that time Miss Braddon has continued to produce a succession of bright, stirring, somewhat sensational stories, which have always been popular. **Mrs Anne Thackeray Ritchie (1839),** to whom reference has already been made in the sketch of her father, Mr Thackeray, has done much good work with the delicacy, exquisiteness of touch, and fine womanly instinct that form her most distinguishing characteristics. Her first novel was *The Story of Elizabeth* (1863), which was followed by *The Village on the Cliff*, *Old Kensington*, and various other tales. **Joseph**

Hatton (1839) has been largely engaged in journalism, but is chiefly known as a clever writer of novels and works in general literature. Of his novels, mention may be made of *Clytie*, *By Order of the Czar*, *Under the Great Seal*, and *The Dagger and the Cross*. **Robert Buchanan (1841)**, whose more important productions as a poet have elsewhere been noticed, has more recently devoted most of his time to the drama and fiction, in both of which he has won considerable success. His best novels are *The Shadow of the Sword* (1876), and *God and the Man* (1881). **Andrew Lang (1844)** also found his chief distinction in other fields than that of fiction ; but in 1896 he followed up *The World's Desire* (1890), a tale written in collaboration with Mr Rider Haggard, with an historical romance entirely from his own pen. *The Monk of Fife*, as the story is called, is supposed to be the chronicle of a certain Norman Leslie of Pitcullo, concerning events that 'befell in the Realm of France' during the time of the unfortunate Joan of Arc. It is full of life, movement, and adventure, described with much spirit and realistic effect. The historical personages and the actual occurrences have been closely studied, and are set forth not only with due attention to accuracy of detail, but with a mastery of style not usually found in the popular novel. **Henry Seton Merriman**, *nom de plume* of Mr Hugh S. Scott, has, especially in his fine Russian tale, *The Sowers* (1896), produced work of so much ability, that anything that now comes from his pen will be

eagerly welcomed. **John Strange Winter (1856),** whose real name is Mrs Stannard, has told us how she won her position in literature, after many struggles and discouragements, by the publication of *Bootles' Baby* and *Houp-La* in 1886, the public attention being drawn to them chiefly by her fresh and apparently familiar descriptions of army people and child life. She has worked the same vein many times since, and has achieved a fair amount of popularity. **Marie Corelli (1864),** in spite of grave faults, both of subject and of style, has had extraordinary success as a novelist. Her first novel, *A Romance of Two Worlds* (1886), has passed through many editions. The same good fortune has attended all her later ventures. Of her more recent works, *Barrabas* (1893), which introduces, not in an irreverent spirit, the sacred scenes and personages of the crucifixion and resurrection, *The Sorrows of Satan* (1895), and *The Mighty Atom* (1896), in which the evils of a purely secular education are vehemently denounced, are all open to cavil on the score of taste, but are not without elements of power. Such writers as **Mrs Rentoul Esler,** the author of *How they Loved at Grimpat*, and *The Way of Transgressors*, and **Miss Annie S. Swan** (Mrs Burnett Smith), the author of *Aldersyde*, *Carlowrie*, and many other tales, deserve credit for high purpose, and the sweet, pure, feminine tone of their works. **Edna Lyall,** *nom de plume* of Miss Ada E. Bayly, has been more ambitious in her subjects, but has preserved the same wholesome moral quality. *In Golden Days*

reproduces the times of the Restoration; *To Right the Wrong* deals with Hampden and other actors in the great Civil War; while *Donovan*, *We Two*, and others are occupied with the men and problems of to-day. **Mrs Margaret L. Woods** has done stronger and perhaps more enduring work in her boldly planned and carefully executed, *A Village Tragedy*, *Esther Vanhomrigh* — a tale of the great Dean — and *The Vagabonds*. Mr Kipling has given high praise to **Mrs Flora Annie Steel (1847)**, a Scottish lady, resident for more than twenty years in India, for *The Potter's Thumb* (1894) and *On the Face of the Waters* (1896). The last is perhaps the most vivid presentation of the great Indian Mutiny in the form of fiction that has yet appeared. In some places it rises to unusual power, and is indeed almost a great book. If it anywhere fails, it is in sacrificing the imaginative for the historical elements, in the writer's too great anxiety to set forth nothing but the facts in that tremendous episode in our national history. Followers in the new Scottish School of Barrie, Crockett, and Maclaren are numerous, such as **D. S. Meldrum**, author of *The Story of Margrédel* and *Grey Mantle and Gold Fringe*—both of them illustrative of life and manners in Fifeshire; **Gabriel Setoun**, the chronicler of the lights and shadows of Scottish life in the village of 'Barncraig'; and **David Lyall**. And what is thus being done for Scotland has also been done for Ireland by **Miss Jane Barlow**, whose *Irish Idylls*, *Kerrigan's Quality*,

Mrs Martin's Company, and other works show fine art, poetry in the treatment of local scenery, and the closest observation of the Irish peasantry. In local colour **Miss M. E. Francis** (Mrs Blundell) also excels, her various tales showing no little power in depicting the customs of Lancashire, and in the use of its peculiar dialect.

CHAPTER IV

Historians and Biographers

Victorian History.—The earlier part of the Victorian era is rich in great writers of history—writers who worked upon a large canvas, crowded with figures, and who used an amplitude of detail, and a painstaking accuracy of research that have no parallel, except, perhaps, in the great author of *The Decline and Fall.* It could boast of such contemporary historians as Grote, Macaulay, Froude, Carlyle, Freeman, Gardiner, and Lecky; and a period that could do that might justly claim to be not only the most brilliant, but also the most prolific of all periods of historical inquiry. But as we near the close of the era, a change becomes manifest. We look around in vain for the successors of these great historians. It is true that history still has its attraction for many pens, but it is a history in cameos. The vast and crowded canvas is no longer to be seen in the work of the younger men. Very brilliant are the pictures they present, but space is wanting. Their art for the most part resembles that of the microscopist who

focuses his lens upon a minute field of inquiry, and makes the most insignificant details within that field stand out in sharp and vivid outline. Within narrower limits therefore exhaustive historical research continues. But even less than before it concerns itself with the doings of kings and statesmen, the intrigues of courts, the finesse of diplomacy, and the din of battlefields. Its business is rather with the common everyday life of the people of past times, and with the inception and progress of those social, political, and religious movements that have made the nations what they are to-day.

Into its treatment of such subjects has necessarily entered much of that scientific spirit that is predominant in the thought of the Victorian age. Guided by this spirit, the historian sees in a nation, not the mere sport or victim of a succession of powerful men, who, acting capriciously, or in their own interest, have chosen to put their seal upon it, but the slowly evolved product of laws pressing with the cumulative force of centuries of change upon king and statesmen, scholar and peasant alike. It is this that is now giving to the conception of history an epical grandeur and completeness, by transferring attention from the meanness and pettiness of individual agents to the operation of social and moral forces that are as cosmical in the vastness and certainty of their action as the tides themselves.

But as to the manner in which history shall be presented, the historians of the Victorian era are not

agreed. In general they may be said to range themselves in two opposite camps: that of the so-called romantic historians like Macaulay and Froude, who deem it the duty of the historian to set forth the facts with a due regard to impressiveness and pictorial effect; and that of writers like Freeman and Gardiner, whose conception of the historian's duty is to state the facts fully, simply, and accurately, regardless of effects.

Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881).—Thomas Carlyle, one of the most original men of genius of the reign, may be classed among the historians of the period, although in virtue of much characteristic work of another kind, he falls quite as appropriately under its essayists and miscellaneous writers. There is no more striking figure than his in our gallery of Victorian authors. To him belongs not only the interest of great work powerfully done, but also that of a potent moral force, and a personality of peculiar strength and fascination. And for that reason the time has, perhaps, scarcely come to judge him dispassionately. There are those who blame him for an influence which they conceive to have been harmful, especially to youth. There are very many others, however, to whom Carlyle has been infinitely more than poet or philosopher, essayist or historian. To them he has been nothing less than an inspired thinker and guide, his voice being as the voice of a prophet uttering divine messages, and calling them

with imperious tones to truth, reality, and wholesomeness of life. And although in the blaze of revelation that followed his death in 1881, it was inevitable that there should be much revulsion of feeling, to very many he still speaks as with the consecrated energy and moral force of an inspired seer of old.

Of no man, not even Johnson, can it be said that we know him as we know Carlyle. The innumerable acts of his life and all his changeful moods, not only in their tenderness and pathos, their grim humour and noble subservience to duty, but also in their petulant chafings against circumstance, their peevish outbursts of jealousy and spleen, their spasms of selfishness and irritability, nothing softened, nothing withheld, are ruthlessly exposed to view. No such revelation could be altogether pleasing. Nevertheless, the reader with a soul will be able to hear, even beneath these distempered unburdenings, the heart-beats of a truly grand and noble nature, and it will be strange if the feeling be not present, that, after all, none of these frequent littlenesses actually lessen Carlyle's elevation. It may well be, however, that in view of such perturbations of spirit, the ordinary reader may be found congratulating himself that he at least is not of the order of geniuses upon whom descends sometimes so dark a dower of restless discontent.

Thomas Carlyle was born at Ecclefechan, a small village situated in the south of Dumfriesshire, in 1795. His father, James Carlyle, was first a stonemason and

then a farmer. His mother, Margaret Aitken, was of the same humble rank in life. Both were comparatively uneducated, and it is one of the most touching things in Carlyle's story, that when he had become famous, his aging mother learned to write, that she might have the happiness of exchanging letters with her son. These were the two persons whom Thomas Carlyle loved and reverenced beyond all human beings down to the day of his death. Instead of their defects making him ashamed of them, they only filled him with the deeper admiration for their sterling worth and the strength of their native qualities. To their force of character, their mental vigour, their emotional warmth, and especially to their fervent Scottish piety, he always professed himself to be under the deepest obligations; and never has son paid to the memory of parents a more tender and loving tribute than Carlyle has done in the early portion of the *Reminiscences*.

With the laudable pride that so often makes the Scottish peasant desire to give to his children the advantages of education from which he has himself been debarred, James Carlyle sent his son Thomas to the Burgh School of Annan. Here he remained till 1810, when, in his fifteenth year, he left to enter himself a student in Arts of the University of Edinburgh, with the view of becoming a minister of the Church of Scotland. His course, except in the subject of mathematics, was not brilliant, and he appears to have left the University, as most Scottish students then did,

without seeking a degree. It must have been for him a time of much strain and hardship, during which Carlyle, always a diligent student, appears to have fallen into indifferent health. The dyspepsia from which he was to suffer all his days probably dates from the ardour of his scientific studies at this time under Professor Leslie. In the drift of his opinions it seemed less and less likely that he would ever be able to enter the Christian ministry, although he had not yet finally abandoned the idea. When, therefore, he finds employment as teacher of mathematics in the Burgh School of Annan, which, as a pupil, he had left four years before, we still read of his preaching trial sermons as a theological student, and even of receiving praise for them. Two years later, through the good offices of his Edinburgh Professors, he got an appointment to the Burgh School of Kirkcaldy. And here, although not altogether unknown to each other before, Edward Irving for the first time enters the life of Carlyle, not to pass from it again until the brilliant meteor-like career of the great preacher has darkened into ill-starred and premature eclipse. It was natural that two Annan school-boys thus meeting should become friends and see much of each other: it was no less natural that, being the men they were, they should exchange books and discuss opinions with infinite sharpening of wits and enlargement of mental horizons. Affairs of the heart seem not to have been wanting in either case. Irving was engaged to Miss Martin, the daughter of the parish minister of Kirk-

caldy; and to Miss Gordon, the most brilliant of Irving's girl pupils, Carlyle appears to have made advances more or less serious. These, however, the young lady repelled with good feeling and an admirable understanding of the stern grandeur and proud aloofness of the nature that had thus placed itself at her feet.

Schoolmastering was little suited to Carlyle's temperament, and accordingly, after a two years' stay in Kirkcaldy, we find him back in Edinburgh. He has still to support himself by tutoring, but it becomes more and more evident that not in that any more than in preaching is Carlyle to find his true life-business, but in literature. During this time he wrote sixteen articles, chiefly for Brewster's *Edinburgh Encyclopædia*, but these were of no special mark, and gave little promise of what he was afterwards to achieve. Of more importance was his translation of Legendre's *Geometry*, published in 1824. But it was as a student of German, and in the interpretation of German literature to the British public, that he first became favourably known. In 1823 his Life of Schiller began to appear in the pages of the *London Magazine*. It was warmly commended both at home and abroad, and had the honour of being translated into German by Goethe. In 1824, Carlyle translated Goethe's own *Wilhelm Meister*, and this, too, called forth most favourable criticisms. Much other work in the same comparatively untried field, both in the form of translations and of reviews and criticisms, followed, and gave to Carlyle the reputation of a writer of wide knowledge

and much originality. More than any other man he deserves the credit of having thus introduced the masterpieces of German literature to the British public.

Although thus busy with the pen, Carlyle was still engaged in tutorial work. When Edward Irving migrated to London, he recommended Carlyle as tutor to the young Bullers, and thus began a connection which at first at least was satisfactory to Carlyle, both pecuniarily and otherwise. His pupils came to Edinburgh, and he found in them not only apt scholars, but exceedingly kind and courteous boys, with whom it was a pleasure to associate. But the yoke even of such pleasant bondage at length became galling to him, and he relinquished a connection in which no faults present themselves that are not due to his own morose and irritable temper. But Irving, even before this time, had given him an introduction of quite another sort. In Haddington lived Mr Welsh, a surgeon of good repute, who, when Irving was schoolmaster there, had secured his services as tutor to his daughter, Jane Welsh, a lively, mischievous, mocking, but clever, witty, and brilliant girl. She lost her heart to her handsome and grave tutor, and he, but for the engagement already referred to, would probably have reciprocated her love. When in 1821 Irving introduced her to Carlyle, there seemed little likelihood that the latter, with his uncouth appearance, broad accent, and altogether unpolished manners and exterior, would ever prove anything else to the dainty,

elfish little lady than one more butt for her coquetry and sarcasm. But this was not so to be. With all her perception of the ridiculous in her new suitor, there was the feeling, ever growing stronger with prolonged intercourse, that he was her master; and after much chafing of the bit, she married him on October 17, 1826, from ambition, she tells us, not from love. Mrs Welsh, now a widow, did not approve of the match, but made the best of circumstances, and fitted up a house for the pair at Comely Bank, Edinburgh, where, therefore, for the next two years we find them located. Their life ought to have been happy. They had the best society the Scottish capital could offer. Among their friends and visitors were Sir William Hamilton, Professor Wilson, De Quincey, and Francis Jeffrey. The last was discovered to be a distant relative of Mrs Carlyle's, and perhaps for that reason the *Edinburgh Review* opened its pages to Carlyle, so that he became a frequent contributor. The *Westminster Review* and *Fraser's Magazine* also accepted his articles.

His circumstances had thus greatly improved, but probably in no circumstances could Carlyle's lurid, stormy nature have known true rest or happiness. Was it the city noises, or was it the demon of dyspepsia, or was it simply the hunger for change, that tortured him? Whatever it was, Carlyle now determined that they should quit Edinburgh and betake themselves to Craigenputtock, a small property in Dumfriesshire, which had been left to Mrs

Carlyle by her father. Probably with her keen intelligence, bright wit, and instinct for society, she did not willingly consent to be thus buried out of sight. But as usual the stronger will prevailed, and in the summer of 1828, the Carlyles were duly established within their moorland home. Contentment, it is to be feared, did not in this instance come with change, although for a time all seemed to go well. For Mrs Carlyle the six years that followed were in reality years of silence and solitude, of galling disappointment, of growing physical weakness, and of severe and even sordid manual drudgery, the memory of which never afterwards left her. Remote from city noises, absolutely without society, the ill-assorted pair were alone together, but owing to Carlyle's recluse habits of study, without any real companionship. It is true they had their visitors. Good-natured Jeffrey came with his well-meant, ill-requited kindness; and better still, came Emerson in a never-to-be-forgotten visit, during which the much-tormented spirits of Craigenputtock had brief respite of peace and happiness. Yet these were the years of Carlyle's initiation. He had tabernacled in the wilderness. His thoughts had ranged over spaces wider far than any that met his view at Craigenputtock. He now knew himself, and the message which the world was waiting to receive from his lips. Undoubtedly the Carlyle that left Craigenputtock in 1834 was a stronger man than the Carlyle that had entered it six years before. Of actual work, moreover, done during this period, there

was much to show. Carlyle had kept himself abreast of current literature, and, besides, had produced several writings of permanent value. Of these were the famous *Essay on Burns*, an admirably true and sympathetic criticism of the national bard; another essay entitled *Characteristics*, and an estimate of Goethe contributed to the *Edinburgh Review*. But the chief fruit of Carlyle's seclusion among the Galloway hills is the immortal *Sartor Resartus* (The Tailor Patched), into which Carlyle has put more of his philosophy than into any of his later works. This work, of undoubted genius, after many rejections at the hands of the publishers, began to appear in the pages of *Fraser's Magazine;* and while *Sartor* was still in progress the Carlyles in 1834 removed to London. They found a home in No. 24 (now No. 5) Cheyne Row, Chelsea, and here for the next forty-five years Carlyle passed an interesting but uneventful life, given up chiefly to the prosecution of the great literary labours on which his reputation rests. His house in Cheyne Row has recently become the property of the nation, and thus for all time coming, visitors will be able, in some degree at least, to realise for themselves the circumstances amidst which the seer of Chelsea lived and wrote.

The struggle for bread was not yet over, and the pair had to practise the most rigid economies. *Sartor* afterwards came to be recognised as one of the most remarkable books of the century, but in these early days was altogether unnoticed by the multitude,

and in the lettered class excited either an amused contempt or bitter hostility. It had the immediate effect of making journalism for him impossible. Every effort to get work failed. The two or three hundred pounds with which they had commenced their Chelsea housekeeping were nearly gone. Carlyle was sorely tempted to accept Emerson's invitation, and seek his fortunes and a more favourable public in America. The truth is, he was never made to go in harness. His honesty, independence, and love of truth were such that he could not become a party man. Accordingly the great literary organs that had hitherto been open to him closed their doors. The columns of the *Times*, through the influence of his friend John Sterling, would probably have welcomed him, if only he could have donned its livery. In Carlyle's view, starvation would have been better. And how near they came to this grim issue may be learned from what he says in the February of 1835: 'It is three-and-twenty months since I have earned one penny by the craft of literature.' The brave heart, however, had no thought of giving in. Any suitable official position, especially if connected with education, would have been welcome; and Carlyle appears to have thought that in that case he would have had no difficulty in turning his back upon so harsh a mistress as literature had proved. Nevertheless, through all discouragements a great work was shaping itself. Before leaving Craigenputtock he had begun to collect materials relating to the French

Revolution, and had even produced some articles bearing upon it. This was the subject that now engaged all his energies. Carlyle was never one to whom literary effort came easily. With great pains he had gathered together his facts, and with infinite labour he had put the best of himself, mind and heart, into the first volume of this work, when what we must call a serious misfortune overtook him. Mr John Stuart Mill, his most intimate friend at that time, begged to be allowed to read the manuscript, and whilst in his possession, it was inadvertently destroyed by the maid-servant under the impression that it was waste paper. The blow was an overwhelming one for Carlyle, although he bore it with a fortitude, which in a man so easily disturbed by trifles, seems very remarkable. He began afresh, but found the task a hateful one. He had not kept his notes, and experienced the utmost difficulty in recalling what he had written, and especially in regaining his own mental attitude towards it.

It was while the *French Revolution* was still on hand that Carlyle was finally delivered from all anxiety as to money matters. Miss Harriet Martineau and Miss Wilson had interested themselves so effectually on his behalf that two hundred ladies and gentlemen agreed to subscribe a guinea to hear from him a course of six lectures on the subject of German Literature. The course was highly successful, and had the gratifying result of putting £135 into

Carlyle's purse. A second course, this time of twelve lectures, on the History of Literature, was delivered in the following season, with still more pleasing results, for it added nearly £300 to his resources. Carlyle had many of the gifts of the popular orator, although these public appearances were far from his liking. So fruitful a source of revenue, however, could not yet be dispensed with. A third course on the Revolutions of Modern Europe followed; and in 1840 he gave his last and best series, on the subject of 'Heroes,' and never appeared upon a public platform again until twenty-six years later he delivered his memorable Rectorial address to the students of Edinburgh University.

It is pleasing to know that with the success of these lectures all pecuniary anxieties were finally dissipated. In time his works, too, proved successful, and were eagerly bought by the publishers. Slowly but surely Carlyle himself came to be regarded as the representative British man of letters, honoured no less for his moral worth than for his literary genius. Unhappily better fortunes did not bring peace or content to either of the brilliant spirits that composed the Carlyle household. It is impossible not to be struck with their unreasonableness, when we hear them apostrophising heaven and earth against the cackling of an inoffensive hen, or the twang of some neighbouring piano. Only we remember that they cannot always be taken at their word, and that to curse such things in superlatives has

become with them not only a habit, but an art and a luxury.

When *The French Revolution* was published in 1837, it met with a mixed reception, but on the whole it may be said to have turned the tide in favour of Carlyle. It is impossible to apply to this or to any other of Carlyle's historical works an ordinary standard. History, indeed, has never been so written before or since. His method is no less original than his style. Taking his stand among the events he describes, he makes his comments to the reader, who is supposed to accompany him, regarding the appearance and the actions of the various characters. Or in splintered fragments of glowing speech he addresses these characters themselves in bursts of scornful vituperation, bitter mockery, or tenderest pity, as the case may be. Nothing so aflame with the passionate emotion of the writer himself, so full of inwardness and poetry, has ever been written in the form of history. To say this, however, is equivalent to saying that it is not to Carlyle we must look for an unbiassed record. It is less a history than the great dramatic poem of the Revolution.

In his next contribution to historical literature Carlyle adhered more closely to the facts of history. *The Letters and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell* (1845) was immediately and extensively popular, and may be said to have reconstructed public opinion regarding its subject. With his usual painstaking diligence, Carlyle had gathered together all the known utterances,

spoken and written, of the great Protector, and illuminating these with intervals of vivid commentary and dramatic narrative, had succeeded in presenting to the view a towering and impressive personality. For the first time, indeed, Cromwell could now be understood. Here were to be seen not only his rugged force and commanding abilities as military leader and statesman, but also the man himself in relation to his family, his friends, and the laws of his interior life. It was shown that at the root of that life lay an abiding sense of God and duty,—of God as the Sovereign not of nations only, but also of individual men and women; of a duty and responsibility, all pervading, and descending from the greatest to the most trivial acts of a human life.

In view of the self-revelations of these letters and speeches, it became impossible any longer to regard Cromwell only as a vulgar, ambitious, self-seeking, but clever hypocrite; or to doubt that, nowithstanding faults and imperfections, he was not only essentially an honest and sincere man, but also the greatest ruler that had ever swayed the sceptre in England. Modifications of this opinion, due to fuller evidence, have no doubt arisen since; but in the main the popular judgment respecting Cromwell remains that which the *Letters and Speeches* first suggested.

Frederick the Great was the subject of his next important work. The six volumes of this *History of Friedrich II of Prussia* were published between 1858 and 1865, and altogether occupied fourteen busy years

of their author's life. Before he had finished his task, if we may judge by frequent grumblings, it had become an almost intolerable burden. In the work itself, however, there is no slackening of effort, nor indeed any appearance of weariness. On Carlyle's own confession, Frederick was but a 'questionable hero'; yet even in him he could see the real man and born ruler. And what could he not forgive for the sake of those qualities of veracity, sincerity, dominancy of will, and energetic action, that constitute his ideal of a man, and that he finds so signally displayed in Frederick?

As in the other histories, Carlyle here follows the personal method. For although this work in its vast scope really embraces European events during the Eighteenth Century, these events are considered not so much in themselves as in relation to the principal personages at the heart of them; and in the near neighbourhood of these personages the author himself is always to be found.

Frederick II worthily completed the edifice of Carlyle's reputation. It was even more successful in America than at home, but its highest triumph was reserved for Frederick's own country, where it was at once translated and accepted as the greatest authority on its subject. It remains a monument of many of Carlyle's best qualities—his untiring diligence in the collection and sifting of materials; his admirable command of historical perspective; his unequalled lucidity of narrative style; his genius for vivid dramatic portrai-

ture; his humour, his imagination, and his unfailing grasp of the divine significance of life. Even the faults of writings of so much genius will often help their general effect. This may be said to have been the case with Carlyle's excess of figurative language, his extravagance of eulogy and of invective, and even of his disregard of syntax.

Carlyle's works on social and political questions are of little practical value. He generously avails himself of the privilege of denunciation: things could scarcely, in his view, be worse than they are in this England of the Nineteenth Century; but he has little to suggest by way of remedy that is not absolutely and ridiculously futile. What he was in politics it is difficult to define. On some subjects he appears to be a pronounced Radical; on others he is no less decidedly a Conservative; and certainly the castigations he administers to Mr Gladstone are quite as severe as those he bestows on Mr Disraeli.

His *Chartism* (1839), with all its girding at social and political evils, had no remedies other than the trite ones of Education and Emigration to suggest. *The Nigger Question* (1849) and *The Latter Day Pamphlets* (1850) filled men of all parties with consternation at the intemperance of his language, and the apparent wrongheadedness that could find in such generally acceptable changes as the Abolition of Slavery, Model Prisons, and the Extension of the Suffrage, only subjects for a vitriolic scorn and Cassandra-like laments. *Past and Present* (1843) contains

much that is beautiful and suggestive; but when it compares the times of Abbot Sampson and his monks, seven hundred years ago, with the England of to-day and its problems, to the disadvantage of the latter, we feel that little or no weight can attach to its deliverances. His critical judgments cannot be relied upon. The *Burns* essay is altogether admirable. On the other hand, his estimate of Sir Walter Scott does justice neither to its subject nor to himself.

Carlyle's body of thought was not extensive. He was neither a deep nor an exact thinker. He is more remarkable for emotional intensity. He has his moments of seer-like vision, but even prophecy was scarcely more successful in Carlyle than in lesser men. The failure of his vaticinations is more noticeable than their fulfilment. On all subjects his thought left much that was indefinite, persistently shading off from the sharp edges of definition into cloudlands which, however beautiful and suggestive, gave no sufficient foothold to reason. Hence the difficulty of grasping his thought into a coherent philosophical system.

It is rather to the inspirational quality of Carlyle's writings that we must look for his real potency. In the poetic beauty and grandeur of his thoughts, and still more in his constant call to seriousness and strenuousness of life, the reader who can appreciate such gifts and their unusual consecration to high purpose, will be able to forget the strange instrument of language that he used, his extravagant cynicisms

and his sometimes intolerable vehemence of vituperation and attack. Forgetting how he would pose as the one true, honest, capable, and unbiassed thinker of his time, and deducting all that is needful on the score of such arrogance, egotism, and harsh judgment of others—none of which can be denied or justified—there will still be left enough to make Thomas Carlyle one of the most inspiring thinkers of his time, one of the truest, sincerest of men, and the chief literary force among the prose writers of the earlier half of Queen Victoria's reign.

What may be called the end of Carlyle's literary career, although not the end of his life, for he was still to live for many years, is marked by touching episodes. In 1866 he was elected Lord Rector of Edinburgh University, an event which seems to have given him peculiar pleasure. He was then seventy-one years of age, and far from strong, and it was not without misgivings that, in compliance with custom, he proceeded to Edinburgh to deliver the usual inaugural address. All testimonies agree in saying that he was singularly happy on this occasion, and that he had a brilliant reception at the hands of the students. Professors Huxley and Tyndall had accompanied him, and when all was over, the latter, to reassure Mrs Carlyle, who was anxious about her husband, greatly comforted her with the message—'A perfect triumph!'

On the discharge of this duty Carlyle did not at once return to London, and it was during his further

stay in Scotland that the startling event of Mrs Carlyle's death occurred. She had gone for her usual drive round Hyde Park, her little dog following. A passing carriage went over its foot, Mrs Carlyle sprang out and took it into the brougham, and when she was next seen 'she was sitting with her hands folded on her lap, dead.'

The fifteen solitary years that follow are broken by nothing more important than Carlyle's pamphlet, *Shooting Niagara: and After?* a Jeremiad over the extension of the franchise by the Reform Bill of 1867; sketches of the Norse Kings; a criticism of the Portraits of John Knox; and his letter to the *Times* on the Franco-German War. Much of his interest in life had now gone. Through the disablement of his right hand he could no longer hold the pen, and to dictate to another seemed impossible. The end of his long life of eighty-five years—an end for which he had sadly wearied—came on the 5th of February 1881. A resting-place in Westminster Abbey was offered, but in accordance with Carlyle's own directions, he was laid beside his father and mother in the grey churchyard of Ecclefechan.

Lord Macaulay (1800-1859).—When Victoria ascended the throne, Macaulay, then thirty-seven years of age, was still in India, carrying through important judicial reforms, and amassing a fortune—modest indeed, yet sufficient to free him in the future from all pecuniary anxieties. The plan of a great

History of England, to come down to the close of George the Third's reign, had already been sketched; and other projects, both in literature and in politics, now awaited the period of independence. No one can read the story of Macaulay's life in India as told by his nephew, Sir George Trevelyan, without being impressed with his ungrudging devotion to duty as a public servant, and without a feeling of amazement at the wide range of his reading in ancient and modern authors, filling up apparently every moment not given to his official labours. Moreover, the reputation he had won in the pages of the *Edinburgh Review* as one of the most brilliant essayists of the age was not allowed to lapse. From time to time articles such as those on Mackintosh and Bacon were sent home to feed the popular expectation of greater work still to come. Nor can there be any doubt that, although not written till his return, the brilliant pageantries and panoramas of the 'Clive' and 'Hastings' articles were now thought out, and their materials collected.

Thomas Babington Macaulay was born in 1800, at Rothley Temple in Leicestershire, the seat of his uncle Thomas Babington, after whom he was named. His father Zachary Macaulay, of Scottish clerical parentage, was a man of pronounced evangelical opinion and zealous philanthropic effort, especially in the cause of negro slavery. His mother, Selina Mills, daughter of a Bristol Quaker, seems to have been a woman of warm affections, good sense, and superior

mental endowments. The extraordinary precocity of the child was doubtless encouraged by his residence in a home where questions of public interest were frequently and eagerly discussed by men and women eminent both in literature and in philanthropy. At the same time his father and mother were fully alive to the importance of judicious training for their child, and were careful to conceal from him the admiration with which his unusual talents had secretly inspired them. Hannah More also, who was much attached to the boy, and whom Macaulay used afterwards to speak of as a second mother, while seeking to give a wholesome direction to his tastes and energies, treated him with no less wisdom and prudence. The boy's resources of memory and his extraordinary correctness and fluency of language, to say nothing of the justness of his thought for so young a child, became proverbial throughout the so-called Clapham sect to which his parents belonged. What was to be thought of a child of four, who when some hot coffee was spilt over his legs, gravely replied to the condolences of his hostess: 'Thank, you, madam, the agony is abated?' Even with all precautions, however, it might not have been possible to prevent him from becoming a spoilt child, but for his own good sense and extraordinary sweetness and amiability of disposition.

He was educated privately first at a school in Clapham, and then by Mr Preston, a clergyman in Hertfordshire, but as often happens with such boys, he was probably his own best tutor. The feats recorded of his

childhood are of the most astonishing description. He read with avidity, and all he read he remembered. It even seems to have been a matter of regret and inconvenience to him that he could not forget. His own little ventures in various fields of authorship were not wanting. Fortunately for him he had in his mother a critic as discerning as she was sympathetic; and in Hannah More also he found an accomplished literary friend, willing not only to encourage, but also to guide and to restrain.

In his nineteenth year Macaulay was entered of Trinity College, Cambridge, where on the whole he passed through a distinguished course. The five years thus spent were among the happiest of his life. In classical study he took an excellent position, obtaining the Craven Scholarship, but his weakness in mathematics debarred him from the highest honours of his University. He twice won the Chancellor's Medal for English verse; graduated with honours in 1822, and was elected Fellow of Trinity in 1824. To no one could the informal intellectual life of Cambridge, outside of academic routine, have been more valuable, and it was here, in the stimulating gymnastic of the Union, that he won that reputation as a brilliant talker and debater that never afterwards left him.

It was in *The Etonian* and *Knight's Quarterly Magazine* that the brilliant work of this promising young writer first appeared. Of his contributions to the latter were, in verse, 'Ivry' and 'Naseby'; and in prose, 'The Fragments of a Roman Tale,' 'Scenes

from the Athenian Revels,' and the 'Conversation between Mr Abraham Cowley and Mr John Milton touching the Great Civil War.' For none of these pieces is it necessary to make the customary apologies on the ground of youth and inexperience. They are all wonderfully alive, and exhibit many of the best features of that vivid and picturesque style for which the author was afterwards so justly distinguished. In 1824 Francis Jeffrey, casting about for new blood to enrich the pages of the *Edinburgh Review*, was directed to young Macaulay, and was fortunate enough to secure the promise of his help. In the following year, therefore, there appeared from this new pen, in the pages of the great Whig Quarterly, an exceedingly brilliant, though over-luxuriant essay on Milton, which attracted universal attention, and showed that a star of exceptional magnitude had entered the literary firmament. From that time onward to his death Macaulay's reputation never paled. A career of almost unbroken success was his. If his life was not without its trials and sorrows, yet was it singularly calm and free from the disturbing accidents of fortune.

In 1826 he was called to the Bar, but never made either money or reputation as a barrister. In 1827, however, he obtained a Commissionership in Bankruptcy, and in 1830 was, through the influence of Lord Lansdowne, returned to Parliament as Member for the pocket borough of Calne. In the discussions on Parliamentary Reform that followed, he so distinguished himself by his powerful advocacy, that when

the measure was passed in 1832, he was elected M.P. for the new constituency of Leeds. In the same year he became Secretary of the Board of Control; but a greater change in his life took place when in 1834 he went to India as President of a New Law Commission and Member of the Supreme Council of Calcutta. His work there has already been referred to. He returned to England in 1838, and was elected M.P. for Edinburgh. During the following years he held the offices of Secretary of War and Paymaster of the Forces under successive Liberal administrations. In the general election of 1847, however, Macaulay lost his seat, chiefly because of his attitude on the Maynooth question, and his too frank expressions of opinion regarding the Evangelicals, both of which were displeasing to his constituents. But in 1852 they made generous amends by unanimously re-electing him without personal solicitation or expense. A still greater honour, however, came in 1857, when he was raised to the peerage as Baron Macaulay of Rothley, the first literary man on whom this honour had ever been bestowed. He did not long survive it, but died suddenly of heart disease on the 28th of December 1859, at Holly Lodge, Kensington. He was buried in Westminster Abbey.

Death only made plainer to every one the fine qualities of the great historian—his generosity and friendliness, his geniality and sweetness of temper, the unblemished purity of his private life, and the flawless integrity of his public character. Great honours had

come to him, but no one could say that they had not been rightly won.

Macaulay had never married, although never, perhaps, was there a man more clearly framed for domestic happiness. It is, in fact, in the domestic relation that we see him at his best—as the most loving and dutiful of sons, the most tender, affectionate and unselfish of brothers, and for the children the most generous of uncles, and the most delightful and amusing of playmates. So beautiful, indeed, is his devotion in this sphere that it almost seems to engross in him the wholeness and sacredness of feeling which in other men take the form of religion.

There was nothing notably distinguished in Macaulay's outward appearance, nothing to betoken either the power or the brilliance of his genius. No one, however, could listen to the volume of his talk without being struck, not with its copiousness only, but also with its wealth of allusion, its cogency of argument, and its exceeding richness of illustrative detail. His public speeches were interesting and powerful, but rather because they revealed the brilliant essayist than because they showed the born orator, for neither in voice nor in manner can Macaulay be said to have reached the accomplishment of true oratory.

It was during the last twenty years of his life, following his return from India, that all his best literary work was done. His famous Essays, contributed to the *Edinburgh Review*, extend from 1825 to 1844, and may be said to be the recreations of a

life the more serious purpose of which is expressed in the 'Lays,' and still more in the great 'History.' In 1842 *The Lays of Ancient Rome* were published in book form, and had an extraordinary success. Whether we regard them as poetry or not, it must be allowed that they give a most graphic and picturesque setting to the legends of ancient Rome, and carry the reader along with a verve and exhilaration of movement as fascinating to the scholar as they are to the less cultured reader. In the following year he published a collected edition of his Essays, being driven to this step, as he explains, by their publication in various unauthorised and imperfect forms in the United States. Probably not even the 'History' has been read by a larger number of readers than the Essays. The energy and vivacity of youth are in them. Whatever faults they may have, they are never dull. Their brief sketches of character, their rapid summaries of events, are all given with an energy that seems unflagging, and sparkle with allusions drawn from the most distant and diverse regions of history and literature. His view of certain characters, such as Boswell, Johnson, and Bacon, may lack insight; his estimates of authors may be deficient in true critical faculty—and of this he himself seems to be aware; his humour may be wanting in inwardness and subtlety, and partake too much of the boisterousness of mere horse-play; and undoubtedly the ardour of the political partisan is throughout a little too manifest; yet where else shall we find essays

that round themselves into such a completeness of vivid human interest? When we come to examine his subjects more closely, we see that most of them concern statesmen, men of letters, and events of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and that they are thus to be regarded as tentative drafts of the great design of his 'History.' Despite Professor Minto's contrary opinion, there is much reason for thinking that in Macaulay's life there is manifest a distinct concentration of purpose, and that notwithstanding the important imperial and other interests in which he was engaged—and he was never a man to spare himself—he lived his life chiefly for the History. On this from his earliest undergraduate days his mind had been set, and for this he continued through all the years that followed patiently and laboriously to amass the vast stores of material that went to its composition. Other things—the care of a department, the struggles of parliamentary life, the toils of a jurist in India—might stay, for a time, his hand; but in his mind the purpose lived, and, consciously or unconsciously, the absorption of serviceable material went on.

His rejection by the Edinburgh constituency in 1847 was really a benefit to him, inasmuch as his retirement gave him the leisure necessary to complete the first instalment of his great work. The following year, therefore saw, the publication of the first of two volumes of *The History of England*, in which, according to its opening sentence, it was the

purpose of the author 'to write the history of England from the accession of King James the Second down to a time which is within the memory of men still living.' The run upon this work was enormous. Nothing like it had ever been seen before. Edition after edition appeared, both here and in America, and was eagerly bought up. When the third and fourth volumes came out there was no lessening of popularity. A fifth volume—the last—was published in 1861, after the author's death, and without the careful finishing touches that his hand would have given it. In Great Britain alone it is estimated that within thirty years of publication, one hundred and forty thousand copies of the 'History' had been sold. And yet it was but a fragment of his great design. That design had embraced all the period between the accession of James II and the close of the reign of George III—a period of nearly a hundred and fifty years. In reality the 'History' ends with the death of William III, and covers a period of fifteen years only. How much was the world's loss in this, no one can estimate. Eagerly men had been relishing by anticipation his brilliant sketches of character and events in the time of Queen Anne—a period which he had made peculiarly his own, by endless toil in the by-ways of historical research. He was known to have consulted thousands of pamphlets, tracts, and playbills, besides the ordinary authorities. But all these vast accumulations were to pass away with the great historian, and one can only regret that so many side

issues of his useful and complex public life should have withdrawn him unwillingly from his most serious design.

We may confidently say that Macaulay's unparalleled popularity was not due to any caprice of public taste, or to any mere fashion of the hour. History, in fact, had never before, and has never since, been made so interesting. The reader is as irresistibly carried along, as if he were devouring the pages of some enthralling romance. Yet, truth and reality are nowhere sacrificed in order to produce striking and romantic effects. The more solid qualities of the historian are all here. Never was industry more patient and laborious in the gathering of material, or in the endeavour to make the presentation of it life-like and true. And, although mistakes and exaggerations have here and there been pointed out—as was indeed inevitable in a work dealing with such a multitude of details—it still deservedly remains the greatest, as it is also undoubtedly the most popular, history of the century.

No one can fail to be struck with the perfect lucidity of Macaulay's style—a lucidity so absolute as to make it impossible for any one endowed with ordinary intelligence to misconceive his meaning. This has even been charged against him as a fault, and it has been said that he makes his meaning so unmistakable, that there is nothing left for the reader's mind to do. But when we consider how hard a thing it is to attain to a clearness such as this without sinking to puerility, we may well be thankful to the great historian for

what is in truth an extraordinary merit and attraction in his style.

Another of the noticeable qualities in Macaulay as a writer is his unrivalled force of argument. This is shown not only in the manner in which he exhibits, by a series of particulars rising in cumulative force, the weakness involved in an opponent's position, but also in the perspicuous statement of his own opinion, and the art with which, by persuasive argument, he so drives it home, as to make it appear that no other view is in the circumstances possible.

Macaulay's style is that of a great historic artist. Scarcely does even Gibbon excel him in the dramatic arrangement of his materials and the production of his grand effects. All his vast accumulations are wrought in so deftly as materially to help on the general action, and to make the principal characters and events stand out in the more vivid clearness. His thousands of facts, gleaned from the most remote quarters, are managed with such art that not one of them seems out of place or in itself insignificant. Each is made to appear so necessary a part of the rich and brilliant mosaic into which it has been wrought, that without it the whole would have been wanting in charm and completeness.

Where there is so much that is admirable, it is difficult to particularise. Perhaps the most masterly portion of the great work is the celebrated Third Chapter with its wonderful picture of social England in 1685. When one considers the labour that must

have gone to the compilation of the vast array of facts of which the picture is composed, and the literary skill employed in their artistic combination, it is impossible to refuse to the author the highest credit as an historian. His summaries of events are most masterly. The descriptions of particular scenes and incidents, such as the rebellion and death of Monmouth, the siege of Londonderry, and the massacre of Glencoe, are given with uncommon spirit and graphic force. Even when there may be a disposition to challenge the justness of his estimate of great historic characters, as in the case of Marlborough, it will be allowed that he has presented them with an extraordinary vigour. The 'History,' indeed, is alive throughout with a fascinating sparkle and brilliancy. The reader has not a dull moment from beginning to end.

But it has become the fashion with certain critics to decry Macaulay. He has had to pay the usual penalty of excessive popularity in the reaction that is always sure to follow. It is said of him that he was arrogant and over-confident; that he was apt, when he had uttered himself on any question, to think that there was nothing more to be said upon it; and that he judged all political personages and events, and therefore judged them partially, from a Whig standpoint. It is also affirmed that he was wanting in original thought; that he gave to the world no new views on any subject whatever; and that, satisfied with the functions of the narrator, he has left no wise deduc-

tions of universal import as his conclusions from the events of the period under review. They have especially dwelt upon his lack of insight and subtlety in the analysis of complex characters or events, alleging that he has been successful only with such as wore their qualities on the surface, and that he failed to comprehend the mystery that is present in every truly great human personality, arising from that mixture of conflicting motives and counterbalancing tendencies that goes to make it what it is.

Now it may well be that much of this is true, and yet that Macaulay's merit as an historian is none the less. He is no spinner of theories, but just what he professes to be, a narrator of events, who, admitting his readers to the concrete spectacle of history which his genius has enrolled, allows them to form their own conclusions, and to perplex themselves, if they choose, with any abstract speculations that may seem pleasing to them.

Notwithstanding all faults, his 'History' remains the History of the Century, brilliant and captivating beyond all precedent, and it does not seem improbable that his own expectation regarding it may be realised. 'I have tried,' said he, 'to do something to be remembered; I have had the year 2000, and even the year 3000, often in my mind. I have sacrificed nothing to temporary fashions of thought and style.'

James Anthony Froude (1818-1894). It seems

to have given pleasure to Macaulay to think that in the dramatic treatment of history he was not to be without his imitators. When in 1856 James Anthony Froude published the first two volumes of his *History of England from the Fall of Wolsey to the Defeat of the Spanish Armada*, there could be no doubt that Macaulay's successor in the line of romantic historians had been found. History, indeed, has never enlisted a more brilliant pen, and whatever may be thought regarding Froude's merits as a working historian, no one will dispute the high distinction of his style, or his supreme excellence in the region of historic art. It is true that nothing like the popularity of Macaulay has fallen to his lot, nor can we wonder. Nevertheless, not even in Macaulay's hands has the drama of history been more vividly portrayed, or its characters and events been made to appeal more strongly to the imagination of the reader. Froude's colours glow upon the canvas with an extraordinary brilliancy, and in spite of protests, burn themselves into the memory, so that the historic figures already imprinted there insensibly take tone from the stronger portraits which he has placed beside them. It is true that so far the world has not to any great extent accepted Froude's conception of Henry VIII, or even of Mary, Queen of Scots; but it has been compelled to revise its judgments concerning them, and thus to reckon with an historian who, to the greatest industry in collecting the materials of history, has united an unerring instinct for their dramatic arrangement, an almost

creative genius in the delineation of character, and an unequalled glow and witchery of style.

But if Froude must be regarded as one of the most brilliant and consummate historic artists of this or any century, it must be admitted that he is pre-eminently unreliable. His are the qualities of the special pleader rather than the judge. No impartial holding of the balance seems with him to be possible. He is as eager to convict one set of characters as he is to acquit others. There is no desire, we may admit, to falsify the truth of history. But starting with the paradox that the commonly accepted opinion regarding any great historic character is almost certain to be wrong, he easily convinces himself, and makes it his business to collect overwhelming evidence to convince the reader that it is so. With a painstaking and perverse industry, state papers and all other available sources of information are ransacked to furnish forth the evidence required. Thus in his hands Henry VIII becomes a much-maligned prince, generous and refined, marred, it is true, by faults, yet withal the greatest Englishman of his time, and quite incapable of the monstrous cruelties generally laid to his charge. And so artistically is all this done, that had the popular judgment regarding the great Tudor been only less pronounced, it might, perchance, have been reversed or shaken. The same method is observable in his treatment of Mary, Queen of Scots, whom he pursues throughout his pages with an extraordinary rancour, refusing to leave her alone even in the pitiful tragedy

of her death, and hesitating not to turn every little word and act during the last cruel moments of her life into the proofs of duplicity and acting.

When, however, Froude is not thus under the influence of prejudice, he can be trusted to unroll the panorama of events before us with a skill and fascination as faithful to fact as it is masterly in style. Far distant times are made to live again before us with a wonderful air of reality. His scenes, crowded with life and colour, seize upon the imagination irresistibly, and we follow them with an interest and exhilaration which only the rarest works of fancy can evoke. Within the realm of historic imagination he thus causes us to experience a high and refined pleasure; but, especially in relation to the most important personages and events, we want the assurance that our feet are firmly planted upon facts.

James Anthony Froude was the youngest son of the Venerable R. H. Froude, Archdeacon of Totness, and was born in 1818 at Dartington, Devonshire. He was educated at Westminster School and Oriel College, Oxford. In 1840 he took his degree with second class honours in classics. Two years later he was made Fellow of Exeter College, and in 1844 took deacon's orders in the Church of England. For some little time thereafter he served as Curate in Torquay. The Tractarian movement was then at its height, and Froude, his elder brother Hurrel, and many other able and earnest young Oxonians came under the magic spell of John Henry Newman's remarkable personality.

The influences under which Froude then passed were destined to lead him very far afield. A distinct tendency towards sceptical thought became manifest in 1847, when he published a series of stories entitled, *The Shadows of the Clouds*, and still more when, two years later, *The Nemesis of Faith* appeared. These publications cost him not only his Fellowship, but also an educational appointment in Tasmania. After some little uncertainty as to his future, *The Westminster Review* and *Fraser's Magazine*—of the latter of which he subsequently became editor—opened their pages to him, and Froude began to find a sphere for himself in literature. His position was won when there appeared in 1856 the first two volumes of his *History of England*, completed in 1870 in twelve volumes. The so-called *Short Studies on Great Subjects* followed at intervals, and sustained by the brilliant incisiveness of their style, as well as by their interest and pre-eminent readableness, the high repute won for him by his 'History.' In *The English in Ireland in the Eighteenth Century* (1871-1874) he maintained that the miseries of Ireland were largely due to the Irish themselves. His sketch of *Julius Cæsar* (1879) vindicated the character of the great Dictator from charges, based, as Froude conceives, mainly on the evidence of mendacious documents issued by his enemies. A sympathetic sketch of *John Bunyan* for the English Men of Letters Series came from his pen in 1880; and in 1881, following the death of Carlyle, appeared the *Reminis-*

cences of that writer, under the editorship of Froude, Carlyle's literary executor. A tempest of angry criticism broke over this publication, and Froude was much blamed, especially for not withholding many harsh and contemptuous judgments of Carlyle upon persons still living or but recently dead. To all this, however, Froude continued to the last to retort that in doing as he did he only acted up to the spirit of the instructions of Carlyle himself, maintaining that not many years would pass before the public would thank him for giving them a true Carlyle. Working still in this field, he next edited *Mrs Carlyle's Letters*, and then completed his dealings with this most interesting subject by giving to the world his life of *Thomas Carlyle*. Whatever may be thought of Froude's judgment both as to what he has admitted into, and what he has withheld from these various records of the Carlyles, no one can have any doubt as to the extraordinary interest of the pictures themselves, or of the exquisite literary art with which they have been drawn. There may be other lives of Carlyle; there will be none to supersede that which Froude has furnished.

Froude was a great traveller, but the records of his various journeyings have been as provocative of bitterness and controversy as even his historic judgments. *Oceana*, containing an account of his visit to our Australian Colonies, was, notwithstanding its great literary merit, indignantly repudiated by colonials as outrageously contrary to facts. A similar charge

of inaccuracy was brought against his later work, *The English in the West Indies; or, The Bow of Ulysses;* the truth being, that while these works had all the brilliancy and charm of Froude's literary style, the conclusions to which they came had none of the weight attaching to a full and reasoned study of the subject. It would seem, indeed, that on no better evidence than that which meets the eyes and ears of the cursory tourist he made the most sweeping and audacious statements.

Of later works from Froude's pen may be mentioned *The Two Chiefs of Dunboy*, an Irish romance of the eighteenth century; a *Life of Lord Beaconsfield*, and *The Divorce of Catherine of Aragon*.

When Mr Freeman, his great opponent in many an embittered controversy, died in 1892, Froude was appointed Regius Professor of Modern History at Oxford. In his luminous occupancy of this Chair, he delivered various courses of lectures, the last of which, on 'Erasmus,' he gave in the summer of 1894. The effort was highly successful, but proved too much for his failing strength. A prolonged illness ensued, to which he succumbed on the 20th of October following, he being then in the seventy-seventh year of his age. Before his death the 'Erasmus' lectures, the revision of which for the press he had just completed before he took to his bed, had appeared, and besides being a worthy treatment of a subject peculiarly his own, they afforded evidence that his mental vigour was still unimpaired, and that he had lost

nothing of the brilliance and charm of style that had made him one of the foremost masters of English prose.

Another series of his Oxford lectures, on *English Seamen in the Seventeenth Century*, appeared in 1895, and gave the same impression of undiminished vitality and brilliance.

Edward Augustus Freeman (1823-1892) represents a theory of historical composition exactly the reverse of that exemplified by Mr Froude. Agreeing, as they undoubtedly would, that it requires a competent knowledge of the facts, and that such a knowledge is not to be obtained without an exhaustive and laborious study of first-hand authorities, Freeman would deny that there is any duty resting on the historian to set forth these facts pictorially. He would even regard the attempt to clothe them with so-called dramatic interest, or to surround them with an atmosphere of romance, as fatal to the dry light in which alone the personages and events of history can be viewed without distortion. The truth, simply, literally, and in all fulness, he would argue, is the one thing the historian is concerned about.

On the other hand, Mr Froude might maintain that if history were only for experts, such a theory might hold good, but that as it is a branch of literature and intended for general use, it ought to be made literary, by being made to assume such forms as shall impress the imagination, and cause the reader to feel that he

is gazing not upon the pale, ghostly shadow of life, but upon life itself. When, however, picturesqueness and colour are obtained at the cost of truth and accuracy, it is no longer history but romance that is presented to us, and the result is even more to be deplored than when the 'dryasdust' historian sickens the reader with his innumerable details concerning matters of no human interest to any one except the professional student or expert.

It so happens that both these historians have been charged with inaccuracy, although Mr Froude has suffered much more at the hands of the critics in this way than Mr Freeman. With the latter, undoubtedly, rests the credit of greater reliability. Still, it is well to remember that a sufficiency of accurate knowledge is not more necessary towards the complete effect at which the historian aims than the due presence of historic imagination. 'The truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth,' may be a good motto for history, but it may be questioned if it will ever realise itself in the work of the historian who puts into his picture of a long past period only what he finds recorded concerning it in the old-world chronicles and state papers he has consulted as his authorities. The landscape painter who transfers to his canvas only the hard literal facts, seen by his objective vision, will scarcely convince that his representation is a true copy from nature. The idealisings of the artist's mind are also required to add to the objects he has represented on his canvas the something that shall do

for them what atmosphere and association have done in nature. In like manner, the historian, looking back upon the facts over a gulf of centuries, does not, and cannot see them in the atmosphere in which they revealed themselves, without the exercise of historic imagination.

It must be confessed that great as Mr Freeman's authority is as an historian, his manner is often most unattractive; and that profound as is the respect paid him by the student of history called to work within the same fields, he is but little known or appreciated by the general reader. None the less will his name be handed down as that of one of the most industrious, widely learned, and reliable historians of this or any period. He grasped, as few have done, the conception of history as a unity that can only be properly studied when realised as a whole.

A glance at his published writings will show over how wide a field his own historical interests ranged. It is curious, however, to note regarding Freeman that, notwithstanding his vast erudition in his own special province, he was not in any other sense a man of wide culture. Indeed, we find in him not a few of the limitations that seem to us so strange in Darwin. For music and the fine arts he has little or no taste. Literature proper in its inwardness, its subtler and more elusive qualities, does not appeal to him. Perhaps it was inevitable that such a man should be arrogant and narrow, and impatient of opinions differing from his own. At least it was so, and

nothing is more characteristic of him than the frequency and the vehemence of his polemical encounters.

Mr Freeman was born at Mitchley Abbey, Harborne, Staffordshire, in 1823. He appears to have been a precocious child. At three years of age he began to write verses, and at five and a half had attracted the notice of Hannah More by his love of learning, just as young Macaulay had done some twenty years before. He began to devote himself to the study of history before he was seven. The recently published *Life of Freeman* by Dean Stephens (1895), gives a most interesting, though somewhat uninviting, picture of a childhood that can scarcely be called childhood. He played at no games, was argumentative and too confident of his own opinion, would engage in controversy with his elders when he should have been at the cricket bat, and would give himself to the study of theology when it would have been more profitable to be working boyish mischief. What wonder that at sixteen he should be something of a prig! And yet, at eighteen he failed in winning the scholarship at Balliol on which he had set his heart, and his course at Oxford from 1841 to 1847 was by no means so brilliant as might have been expected. Strange to say, he did not even win the Chancellor's Prize for an essay on 'The Norman Conquest' for which he had competed. It is impossible, however, not to regard this latter fact with unusual interest, seeing that Freeman was thus led to continue his

study of a subject on which he afterwards became so celebrated an authority.

From the first it would appear that a History Professorship at Oxford was the highest object of his ambition; but it did not come to him till forty years later. Before that time he had written most of the works on which his world-wide reputation rests: *The History and Conquests of the Saracens* (1856), *The History of the Norman Conquest* (1867-1876), *The Growth of the English Constitution* (1872), *The Ottoman Power in Europe* (1877), and many others bearing on History and Ecclesiastical Architecture. They are of the highest historical value, but they do not attract so much as we might expect. And the same might be said of Mr Freeman as a man. His qualities were not generally lovable, and are too much marred by faults of temper and of taste. Still, in spite of such qualities, and also of certain oddities of gait and manner that clung to him throughout life, he was a good, honest, true man, who did a great work with all the best of his powers. Freeman died in 1892. He had published in 1891 the first volume of a *History of Sicily*, which was completed by the publication by his son-in-law of the fourth volume in 1894.

The Right Rev. William Stubbs, D.D., Bishop of Oxford (1825), shares with Professor Freeman the distinction of being the most learned, painstaking, and reliable of the historians of the earlier periods of

British history, and follows the same methods of historical research and composition.

Bishop Stubbs was born at Knaresborough in 1825, was educated at the Grammar School of Ripon, and afterwards at Christ Church College, Oxford, where he crowned a brilliant career by passing first-class in Classics, and third in Mathematics in 1848. In the same year he was elected Fellow of Trinity, and having taken priest's orders, was appointed Vicar of Navestock, Essex. He had already entered upon his minute researches into early British history, as shown in a series of publications of great historical and archæological interest and value. In 1863 he edited Mosheim's *Institutes of Church History*, and in 1864-5 *Chronicles and Memorials of Richard I*, and in following years various other books issued by the Master of the Rolls. As the result of the reputation thus acquired, Dr Stubbs was appointed Professor of Modern History at Oxford in 1866. In the years that followed this appointment, promotion came to him rapidly, both in the Church and in the University, various livings, Fellowships, and other offices falling into his hands. In 1884 he became Bishop of Chester, but five years later was transferred to the See of Oxford, which he still holds.

The greatest achievement of this writer so far is *The Constitutional History of England in its Origin and Development* (1874-8), a work of the utmost importance and authority.

George Grote (1794-1871), of a well-known family of bankers, was born at Beckenham, Kent. In his sixteenth year he entered his father's counting-house, and thus also began his long and honourable career as a London banker. But in giving himself to business, he did not neglect classical studies, and very early formed the design of writing an exhaustive history of Greece. Many years were spent in the collection of materials, but, like Macaulay, he was seriously delayed in the execution of his purpose by political questions and the claims of public life. A Radical in politics, Mr Grote plunged with eagerness into the agitations connected with the passing of the great Reform Bill, and in 1832 was elected Member for the City of London, a position which he retained through several parliaments till 1841, when he finally retired from parliamentary life.

The fruits of his greater leisure were seen in the publication in 1846 of the first of the twelve volumes of his *History of Greece*, which, however, was not completed till 1856. Critics have been generally agreed as to the merits of this great work. It was the fruit of a lifetime of study, and the calmness and reasonableness of its temper and of its judgments were no less apparent than the vast labour and the learning that he had put into it. Naturally he views the men and affairs of Greece from the Democratic point of view, and therefore differs from Mitford, who shows us the same events from the Conservative side.

The excellent *History of Greece* by Connop Thirl-

wall, Bishop of St David's, it is said, would not have been written but for the conviction that the vast accumulations of material which Grote, his old schoolfellow at the Charterhouse, was known to have made, would probably never see the light in consequence of his occupation in public affairs. Both *Histories* take the Liberal view of Greek politics, but of the two, Grote's is the more weighty and popular, and Thirlwall's the more scholarly.

Of much less merit are Mr Grote's *Plato and other Companions of Socrates* (1865) and *Aristotle*, the latter of which was published after his death, which occurred in 1871. He was buried in Westminster Abbey. It would seem that the man in Mr Grote was no less admirable than the historian. Those who knew him speak in the highest terms of his courtesy and amiability, and apparently admire him even more for his simple-minded modesty than for the extent of his learning and the vigour of his intellect.

Although most of the literary activity of **Henry Hart Milman, Dean of St Paul's (1791-1868),** lies outside of the Victorian era, this finely cultured poet and historian makes good his claim to a place among the literary worthies of the reign by his greatest and most durable work, a *History of Latin Christianity* (1854-5). In virtue of its style, adequacy of knowledge, and worthy treatment of a great subject, it deserves high rank among the histories of the century.

Dean Merivale (1808-1893) the author of a *History of the Romans under the Empire* as well as other works on Roman and Early Church History is also deserving of high praise. **John Hill Burton (1809-1881)** wrote genially on many subjects, such as *The Book Hunter* and *The Scot Abroad*, but is most widely known as the author of what is so far the best *History of Scotland*. Much was expected from **Henry Thomas Buckle's (1822-1862)** *History of Civilisation in Europe*, but the two volumes that were all of the author's colossal plan he lived to execute, are crude and unsatisfactory.

Samuel Rawson Gardiner (1829) is the greatest living authority on the period of English history between the death of Elizabeth and the Restoration. He is the author of certain smaller studies in history, such as *The Thirty Years' War* and *The First Two Stuarts and the Puritan Revolution*, and of one monumental work, in three parts, the fruit of more than thirty years of labour and research. The first part of the latter work, entitled the *History of England from the Accession of James I to the Outbreak of Civil War*—1603-1642, and also the second part entitled *The History of the Civil War*—1642-1649, are happily complete. The first volume of the remaining portion, dealing with the *History of the Commonwealth and Protectorate*—1649-1660, appeared in 1894, so that the end of a truly noble undertaking is now fairly within sight. When complete, the whole will form a work of great and permanent value, not less for

the exhaustive thoroughness with which its materials have been gathered and sifted, than for the admirable calmness and freedom from personal bias which it everywhere displays.

The writer is careful to dissociate himself from the methods of Macaulay and Forster, who, he says, look at the events and the men embraced within their narrative through the political feelings and prepossessions proper to our own time. Professor Gardiner's desire is to judge them as from their own standpoint, and if possible to see these times and events as they appeared to the main actors in them. It must be admitted that although dealing with the most exciting period of English history, his narrative wants fire. Interesting, it could not fail to be, considering the nature of the subject. But, rightly or wrongly, the graces of style that lend such a charm to the pages of Macaulay and Froude are not to be found here. In plain, often prosaic fashion, the narrative goes on, but we have at least the satisfaction of knowing that the truth, as far as that can be ascertained, has been placed before us with absolute fidelity. For the first time we feel competent to pass a final judgment upon the many actors in our great English historical epic. Nothing so weighty and authoritative on the period with which it deals has yet appeared, and it scarcely seems likely that it will ever be superseded. In no sense can Professor Gardiner be considered an historic artist. He is singularly wanting in the sense of proportion, and therefore cumbers his narrative with a needless

abundance of uninteresting details. But there is something heroic in the devotion of this historian to his self-imposed task. If what is currently reported be true, that he gives a year of work to a year of history, we have a picture of labour nobly directed, and of self-sacrifice heroically encountered, such as entitle him to the honour of the age. No return in mere money could ever adequately recompense such toil.

In his most recent work, on *Cromwell's Place in History* (1897), based on six lectures delivered in the University of Oxford, Professor Gardiner has summed up the conclusions to which his lengthened study of the great Protector and his times has led him. He finds a parallel between Cromwell and the British people. Foreigners looking on us from without see only a forceful and unscrupulous nation, greedy of wealth and empire; whilst we consider only the benefits that we have conferred by our just and righteous rule. 'With Cromwell's memory,' he concludes, 'it has fared as with ourselves. Royalists painted him as a devil. Carlyle painted him as a masterful saint who suited his peculiar Valhalla. It is time for us to regard him as he really was, with all his physical and moral audacity, with all his tenderness and spiritual yearnings, in the world of action what Shakespeare was in the world of thought, the greatest because the most typical Englishman of all time. This, in the most enduring sense, is Cromwell's place in history. He stands there, not to be implicitly followed as a model,

but to hold up a mirror to ourselves, wherein we may see alike our weakness and our strength.'

Dr Gardiner was born in 1829 at Ropley, Hants. He was educated at Winchester and Christ Church, Oxford, becoming Fellow of All Souls' in 1884, and Fellow of Merton in 1892. For some time he held the Professorship of Modern History at King's College, London, but on the death of Professor Froude, was appointed to the Chair for the same subjects at Oxford.

Alexander William Kinglake (1811-1891) the historian of the *Crimean War*, was born at Taunton in 1811. After an education first at Eton and afterwards at Trinity College, Cambridge, he passed as barrister in the year of Queen Victoria's accession. Shortly afterwards (1844) he became famous by the publication of *Eothen*, a little book of oriental travel of remarkable picturesqueness, and, if we could suppose it to have been published just as it was written in his youth, nine years before, of an equally remarkable promise. To a time-worn and familiar subject it lent an air of absolute freshness, so that the desert became unusually attractive in the glow of his poetic imagination.

During ten years, 1857 to 1867, Kinglake was M.P. for Bridgwater, but his career as a practical politician must be pronounced a failure. In 1863 appeared the first two volumes of his famous *History of the Crimean War*, the last volumes of which were not

published till nearly twenty years later. In Kinglake, great merits as an historian are marred by serious blemishes. In the thoroughness with which he surveys everything within the field of his inquiry he falls no whit behind Professor Gardiner himself. Moreover, in all the qualities of life, motion, the play of changing colour, and the vivid dramatic realism of the pictures with which he fills the imagination, he is not unworthy even of Mr Froude. But, on the other hand, not even Froude himself can outdo him in the spirit of the partisan. The special pleader stands revealed in every page of the history. Never was there a writer of stronger prejudices; never one that showed a more bitter animus towards the objects of his aversion. Thus the whole book is coloured by the writer's excessive dislike to Napoleon III.

Another fault in this work is that its canvas is too large and crowded for the limited nature of the subject. When eight large volumes are required to describe the events of two years, it scarcely requires to be said that the author is wanting in a due sense of proportion. Even as a work of art, notwithstanding the excess of care and elaboration bestowed upon it, it does not rank so high as it might have done if it had been less diffuse, and crowded with detail.

A cloud fell over the closing years of this fastidious, witty, brilliant man of the world, and associate of other clever men, in an almost complete deafness, aggravated by the still more terrible calamity of

cancer in the tongue. Death, therefore, could scarcely have been unwelcome when it came to him on the 2nd of January 1891.

William Edward Hartpole Lecky (1838) was born and educated in Dublin. In 1863 he graduated M.A. of Trinity College, in the University of that city. He holds the honorary doctorate of his own and various other universities ; and on the occasion of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee was made a Privy Councillor. Literature was from the first his vocation. In 1861 he published *The Leaders of Public Opinion in Ireland*, from which it appears that his attention was at this time drawn sympathetically to O'Connell and other leaders of Irish national opinion. In the controversies of more recent years, however, he has been found in the ranks of those opposed to Home Rule, and now sits at Westminster as M.P. for his own university on the Unionist side.

But it is not as a politician, in which relation he has not yet had time to make his mark, that Dr Lecky has won his reputation, but as the most philosophical of the historians of the Victorian era. The great works on which that reputation rests are the *History of the Rise and the Influence of the Spirit of Rationalism in Europe* (1865), the *History of European Morals from Augustus to Charlemagne* (1869), and the *History of England in the Eighteenth Century* (1878-90), including a *History of Ireland*. His latest work, *Democracy and Liberty* (1896), with its wide

and philosophical views of urgent political questions, well sustains the brilliant reputation which this writer has won.

John Richard Green (1837-1883), wrote *A Short History of the English People* that at once obtained a unique popularity—a popularity due to its own undoubted merits, although it may have been enhanced by the personal sorrow which was felt by readers for the writer, as they thought of the slow waning of a most valuable life over a task into which he had put so much of his heart. Although the work of a confirmed invalid, there is no appearance of weakness in it, or any slackness of labour on that account. It at once brought him reputation, and it continues to have a classic value in virtue of its own sterling qualities. Within its brief compass it covers the wide field of English history with consummate art, omitting little that is necessary to a full conception of the English nation regarded as a unity that has been slowly developing through all the past periods of its history. It views events in their just proportions, and places them in their true perspective; and estimates with commendable judgment and impartiality the various forces and movements that have given to the English people a value and significance.

He has taken his conception of history mainly from Professor Freeman, but has brought to its consideration a vividness, a brilliance of style, and a picturesque human interest that entitle the author to rank with

the romantic historians of English literature. From the same pen has come *The Making of England* (1882), and *The Conquest of England* (1883), works even more seriously conceived.

Victorian Biography.—There is no kind of literature that has quite so great a fascination for most minds as Biography; and there has never been a time in which English literature has been more affluent in works of this class. Doubtless the desire to have an intimate knowledge of the men and women who have achieved distinction in any department of human thought or activity is perfectly natural and legitimate. It ceases to be so only when it passes into the form of impertinent curiosity. Unhappily, however, much of present-day literature panders to this unseemly propensity. It was reserved for the Victorian era to give birth to that strange, often offensive, literary exotic, the modern interviewer. His idea that every part of the life and circumstances of a famous man, even down to the furniture of his rooms and the length of his pipes, belongs to the public, is essentially vulgar, and as such foreign to any true conception of literature, which, when genuine, is as remarkable for its admirable reserves as for its large and spontaneous utterance.

A biography, when fitly done, with due regard to reticence and honesty, and especially when the subject of it is left to unfold himself through his letters, is

a most useful as well as attractive human performance. It will probably open up the whole secret of a life, unintelligible otherwise. We may have wondered in regarding only the widely divergent public acts of such a career, what element of character held them together; of what motive forces they were the expression; and from what trend of heredity, education, or environment they borrowed their originating impulse. But when through a worthy biography we thus hold in our hands the key of a noble life, conceive the unity into which its separate achievements are built up, and are able, in short, to comprehend its philosophy, we are furnished not only with a pleasure full of delightful surprises, but also with a most stimulating form of education.

It must be confessed, however, that biography, notwithstanding its great human interest and value, is frequently, even when most popular, not entitled to be called literature. Still, there are to be found within the limits of the Victorian era a quite unusual number of works of this class, showing all that charm of style and power of unfolding in harmonious and truthful fashion the inner life of a man, together with the play of outward circumstances upon him, that entitle them to be considered literary in the best sense of the term.

The memorable year, 1837, that witnessed the Queen's accession, the publication of *Pickwick*, Carlyle's *French Revolution*, Browning's *Strafford*, and Hallam's *Literature of Europe*, saw also the earlier

volumes of **John Gibson Lockhart's** *Life of Sir Walter Scott.* This work, written by Scott's son-in-law, remains the most fascinating biography of the Victorian era, and according to common opinion, is also the greatest in all literature with the single exception of Boswell's *Life of Samuel Johnson.* Taken along with the *Journal of Sir Walter Scott*, edited by Mr David Douglas, Lockhart's *Life* shows, as nothing else can, the goodness and lovableness, as well as the true greatness of its subject. Lockhart was a man of many attainments, but his supreme gift would seem to be found in biography, for besides the admirable *Life of Scott*, he had published in 1828 what is still considered as the best *Life of Robert Burns.*

Lockhart himself, most of whose writings belong to preceding reigns, was a man of the most brilliant and versatile powers. He had written four novels, *Valerius*, *Adam Blair*, *Reginald Dalton*, and *Matthew Wald*, the best of which was *Adam Blair*, although none of them can be said to have brought him much reputation. By his fine and spirited *Spanish Ballads* and other works in poetry, he had shown himself to possess a more genuine gift. As a journalist his distinction was even greater, and very many articles from his pen, contributed chiefly to *Blackwood's Magazine* and the *Quarterly Review*, of the latter of which he was long the editor, established his reputation as one of the most trenchant and widely cultured critics of the time. No literary man, however, has been more cordially hated. There seemed to many

a diabolic malignity in the slashing criticism in which he indulged in his earlier Blackwood days. It may be doubted if even the fine life of Lockhart by Mr Andrew Lang, just published, will altogether undo this impression. Lockhart was too proud of being known as the 'Scorpion, and certainly did not dislike using the scorpion's sting. That, however, this born critic could on occasions be both just and generous is beyond all question. Mr Lang has shown that this man of few friends was yet of true Christian piety, of wholesome domestic tastes, of warm affections, and, in the circles of private life, of no little kindliness and charm. The picture of his sad and lonely old age after repeated bereavements is singularly touching and impressive.

Lockhart was born within the Manse of Cambusnethan in Lanarkshire in 1794. He received his earlier education at Glasgow University, and passed, as Snell Exhibitioner, at fifteen years of age to Balliol College, Oxford, where he took first-class Honours in 1813. He afterwards qualified for the Scottish Bar, but, wanting the accomplishment of public speaking, proved a failure. He became one of the brilliant band of writers who in the early days made *Maga* a power in the literary world, and also something of a scandal. He severed his connection with Edinburgh when he went to London in 1826 to become editor of the *Quarterly Review*, a post which he held for nearly thirty years. Before this he had published *Peter's Letters to his Kinsfolk*, and in 1820

had married Scott's eldest daughter. His closing years were clouded by a succession of domestic misfortunes, his wife and all his children except one having predeceased him. He died at Abbotsford in 1854, and found a resting place beside the dust of his great father-in-law, within the classic ruins of Dryburgh Abbey.

A *Life of Charlotte Brontë* (1857) by her friend **Mrs Gaskell**, whose career as a novelist has elsewhere been sketched, is a work of vivid interest and enduring value. Indiscretions as to what it revealed were charged against it; and from subsequent editions certain withdrawals had to be made, because of an imperfect sifting of materials at the first. Besides, it seemed to paint the home life and the outward environments of the remarkable Haworth family in darker colours than the circumstances actually warranted. But these were slight faults compared with the many merits which make it one of the classics of English Literature. Two important additions to the literature of this most interesting subject have recently been made in Dr Wright's *Brontes in Ireland*, and Clement K. Shorter's *Charlotte Bronte and Her Circle.*

George Henry Lewes (1817-1878) was one of the most versatile writers of the Victorian age. Nothing seemed to come amiss to him. He was novelist, dramatist, critic, biographer, man of science and philosopher all in one. It may be doubted, however, if he will be remembered by posterity for anything except his strange association with the life-history of George Eliot, and his

fine *Life of Goethe*. Even the Germans accept this work as the standard life of their great national poet. In the year (1847) in which he published *Ranthorpe: A Tale*, greatly admired by Charlotte Brontë, appeared his *Biographical History of Philosophy*, a work lacking in weight and authority in the philosophical part, but undoubtedly interesting in its sketches of famous philosophers, ancient and modern, from Thales and Pythagoras to Hegel and Comte.

Considerable literary value attaches to **Dr Hanna's** *Life of Dr Chalmers*, his father-in-law. The interest of this work is not altogether due to the fame of its subject as preacher, philanthropist, and ecclesiastical statesman. Besides the strong personality of Chalmers himself, and the unusual interest of the ecclesiastical events which he did so much to originate and control, the 'Life' itself is done with a fine art, and a command of chaste and beautiful style that entitle it to rank high amongst Victorian biographies. Considerable interest attaches to the *Life of Dr Thomas Arnold*, the great schoolmaster of Rugby, by **Dean Stanley**; and to the sympathetic *Life of Frederick W. Robertson*, by **Stopford Brooke.**

Professor Masson's monumental *Life of Milton*, viewed in relation to all the events of his time, belongs, perhaps, more properly to history than to biography. By the exhaustiveness of its treatment, it is certainly better fitted to become a work of supreme authority for students and experts, than a work for general readers. The genial ex-Professor

of English Literature in the University of Edinburgh is the author of various other works in literary biography, such as *Drummond of Hawthornden*, *Chatterton*, and *De Quincey*, besides many critical papers.

After the *Life of Scott*, no Victorian biography is more interesting than the *Life of Lord Macaulay*, by his nephew, **George Otto Trevelyan**. It is saying much to affirm that this life of the great Whig historian is as interesting as his own matchless narratives of events, or brilliant sketches of politicians and men of letters of past generations. Not a little of its charm is due to the manner in which it discovers to us the underlying simplicity of Macaulay's character, his kindliness and sympathy, and especially his generous and unselfish devotion to the members of his own family circle. It shows a nature on good terms with itself, but also one never tired of doing kind and unselfish things for others. The 'Life' is executed throughout with fine art; and we feel that the Macaulay it presents is the true Macaulay for all time to come. Mr, now Sir, George Otto Trevelyan, who has of late years won considerable distinction as a prominent politician, first gained the attention of the public with his work, *The Competition Wallah*. He is also the author of *The Early Times of Charles James Fox*.

The *Life of John Sterling*, by **Thomas Carlyle**, his friend, owes its interest less to anything remarkable in its subject than to the genius of the writer, who is here to be seen in one of his most sympathetic and attractive moods. Better than anything directly

bearing upon Sterling—whose personality is not a strong one—is the well-known description of Coleridge to be found in this work. The seer of Highgate, it would seem, did not receive from the future sage of Chelsea all the homage he drew from such ardent disciples as Sterling and Maurice. But, perhaps, Carlyle's descriptions, bating the inevitable exaggerations, are all the more valuable on that account.

John Forster (1812-1876), the helpful friend of so many literary men, was himself a man of versatile ability. His series of important historical works connected with the period of the Great Civil War would have justified his being placed among the historians, only they have been somewhat discredited by the later and more authoritative achievements in the same field of Professor Gardiner and others. It is less, therefore, by his *Statesmen of the Commonwealth*, *Arrest of the Five Members*, *The Grand Remonstrance*, and *Sir John Eliot*, than by his interesting Lives of Oliver Goldsmith, Walter Savage Landor, and Charles Dickens, that he is likely to be remembered in English literature. At his death in 1876 he left unfinished a *Life of Dean Swift*, from which much was expected, and for which he was known to have made extensive preparations.

From the number of excellent biographies of the period, *The Life of Charles Kingsley*, by his wife, must not be omitted. It presents a most attractive picture, and we feel that it is a true one. It makes plain much that was only imperfectly understood in

the Rector of Eversley, in whose tenderness, fine sincerity, and boyish enthusiasms, as thus revealed, we find the best commentary we could have, not only upon his public acts, but also upon his many writings.

Reference has elsewhere been made to *The Life of Thomas Carlyle*, by **James Anthony Froude**, which, whatever may be its faults on the ground of over-frankness, will undoubtedly hold its place as one of the most interesting and brilliant presentments of a literary man to be found in any language.

In the *Life of John Ruskin*, by his Secretary, **W. G. Collingwood**, the splendid gifts, the many eccentricities, and the fine humanity of this great writer are adequately portrayed. Professor Knight's *William Wordsworth* and Professor Dowden's *Shelley* are also admirable specimens of literary biography, and the most authoritative works on their respective subjects.

The biographies of scientific men of the period have had a peculiar, sometimes even a romantic, interest. *The Life of Charles Darwin*, by his son—much of it, however, autobiographical—is a book of the greatest importance, not only because of the light which it throws upon the scientific labours of the great evolutionist, but also because of its psychological interest in view of intellectual and spiritual changes passing within himself.

Much of this is also true of the *Autobiography of John Stuart Mill*, a book that puts into very brief compass an amazing amount of the most intensely interesting matter concerning that most fascinating

of all subjects, the development of a rich and highly endowed human soul. The interest of the reader in this case is rendered more acute by the fact that attention is concentrated on what is abnormal both in the manner of education and in the final results to which that education led. *The Life of Sir Richard Owen*, by his nephew, belongs to the same class of scientific biographies, in which we find the records of triumphant scientific progress interwoven with the simply human story of the heart and the home. It presents to us the patriarch of science, the greatest palæontologist of his age, in singular contrast to Darwin and Mill, his contemporaries. Not only do we see in him the opponent of their theories, but also a man in whom the taste for science has not, as in them, starved any other part of his intellectual or emotional being. Amidst the most arduous professional labours he can still find time and inclination for all healthy forms of social intercourse and enjoyment. The theatre, the concert room, and the picture gallery, as well as general literature, have all for him a welcome appeal. Never, moreover, to the last does Owen lose his faith in the unseen, or his attitude of cheerful optimism.

To this selection of important biographies of the Victorian period may be added the various series of smaller works of the same class, such as the *Great Writers Series* and the *English Men of Letters Series*. Many of the latter, which comprises about forty volumes, are of permanent value, and are as good as they could be within their limits. Mention need only

be made of such works as *Milton*, by Mark Pattison; *Wordsworth*, by F.W. H. Myers; *Scott*, by R. H. Hutton; and *Lamb*, by Canon Ainger. Moreover, no notice of this kind would be complete without a reference to the monumental *Dictionary of Biography*, begun in 1882 under the editorship of Mr Leslie Stephen, and still running its course under that of Mr Sydney Lee. It is now (1897) in its fifty-first volume and is already, therefore, a library in itself.

CHAPTER V

Early Victorian Poets

In the still backwater that followed the wonderful poetical flood of the earlier quarter of the century the reign of Victoria opened. Only a short time before, Wordsworth and Scott, Coleridge and Southey, Byron, Shelley, and Keats had almost rivalled the glories of the so-called Elizabethan age in the generous abundance and richness of their poetical benefactions. The inevitable reaction followed. It came unhappily just when a burst of song from noble singers would have well become the auspicious advent of the girl-Queen. But Scott and Byron, Coleridge, Shelley, and Keats were all dead; and although Wordsworth and Southey lingered still, their fires were well-nigh spent. The lustrous day of Tennyson and Browning had not yet dawned. In prelusive efforts these youthful singers had flecked the east with promise, but what their day would be, who could tell? Thus the opening reign was illuminated in poetry chiefly by decaying fires; and of the poets still productive whose reputations were then established—strange though it

may seem to us now—none stood so high as Leigh Hunt and Thomas Hood. Early, however, in the forties both Tennyson and Browning had fairly swung into the poetical firmament, twin suns, destined to grow apace in brightness, but never to see eclipse for nearly sixty years. The publication, therefore, of Browning's *Pippa Passes* in 1841, and that of Tennyson's famous *Poems* in 1842 were most significant events in the history of Victorian poetry. We may even say that the history of that poetry from the day of their advent to the day of their death is, to a large extent, the history of these two poets themselves. But while that is so, and while nothing is more noticeable than their influence, especially that of Tennyson, upon the other singers of the time, it must not be supposed that the age has been wholly imitative in poetry. It has witnessed manifold poetical experiments, and a growing mastery of metrical form. Never at any previous time has verse, as an instrument of human thought and feeling, been so skilfully or so variously handled; and never have there been so many singers capable of an almost technical perfection. Nor with such poets as Tennyson and Browning, Swinburne and William Morris need we use the language of depreciation, even with reference to the higher elements of poetry. Still it must be confessed that, these names excepted, the Victorian era does not shine in the poetry of power. The rule has been cultured mediocrity. The ecstasy and the vision, the sublime thought, the poignant passion, and

the divinely fit expression have seldom been present. Instead of these we have had a poetry of tender sentiment, full of the charm of melody, readily responsive to all influences of beauty from without, and no less critically alive to all that is to be learned from the past thinkings and achievements of men. Joy has not been its prevailing mood. More and more with the advance of the reign has it given expression to a vague unrest and a wistful yearning.

The long narrative poem, such as *Aurora Leigh* and *The Idylls of the King*, was the form by which the earlier Victorian poets chose to express their poetical conceptions. In these later decades the poets have largely abandoned the narrative for the shorter lyric, and in the production of poems of this class have reached a singular happiness of just and beautiful thought and expression. The diffusion of power consequent upon the new journalism and upon the demand especially for fictional literature, with the remunerative openings which they present to literary ability, are doubtless responsible for the fact, that although there never was a time when there were so many singers, the productions of so few ever rise above the level of minor poetry. There is the consolation of knowing that what the age loses in one form, it gains in another; and nothing can be farther from the truth than the gloomy foreboding that the glorious sun of English poetry is near its setting.

Leigh Hunt (1784-1859) belongs of right to an

older generation, but continued his literary activity so far into the present reign that he may justly claim admission to the circle of Victorian writers. A man who was on terms of friendship, more or less intimate, with Hazlitt and Lamb, with Byron, Shelley, and Keats, and who could also number amongst his later friends such writers as Dickens, Carlyle, and Macaulay, cannot have been without interesting qualities. It is true there is an elusive element both in his character and genius, as of a creature diversely compounded; yet the materials are ample for forming a judgment concerning him. He by no means keeps himself in the background of such delightful prose works as his *Autobiography*, *The Town*, and *Men, Women, and Books*. Moreover, as the editor of the *Examiner* his affairs for a time were very much in the public view. To his intimacy with the Carlyles we owe a particularly life-like sketch of him and his. The rugged seer of Chelsea appears to have had a warm corner in his heart for Hunt. And yet it is difficult to ascribe to good nature only his characteristic and amusing description of the eccentricities of the Hunt household. The same may be said with even more truth of Dickens's unfortunate caricature of his friend as Harold Skimpole in the pages of *Bleak House*, although, when challenged, Dickens warmly disavowed all intention of pointing out Hunt by the character, while at the same time admitting that he may have been indebted for some of its externals to him.

Hunt wrote much and in many forms—tales, criticisms, essays, dramas, and biographies, including an unfortunate account of his relations with Lord Byron, which has added nothing to his reputation. But in addition to all this, there is, ranging almost from his earliest years, a body of verse, fluctuating in quality, yet unquestionably poetry; and it is probably upon this part of his literary output chiefly that his reputation will rest. It has, however, been the misfortune of Hunt, as it was also that of his friend Keats, and mainly through association with Hunt, to be judged more by political than by literary standards. A coterie of critics, resenting Hunt's strictures on their favourites, and objecting to the supposed revolutionary principles of the so-called 'Cockney School,' poured unmitigated, often unmerited, contempt upon work which well deserved a better reception. From this injustice Keats has already emerged; his work is now frankly recognised for what it is, and his place among the immortals has been secured. That there will be any such recovery for Leigh Hunt as a poet is less likely. His plane was a distinctly lower one, and it may be that posterity will chiefly honour him for the influence exerted by his friendship and example upon two such fine spirits as Shelley and Keats. Yet there was often in his own verse a certain exquisiteness, a melody, a power of catching the fleeting thought, and of fixing it in the undying word. Unfortunately, however, Leigh Hunt was not always to be seen thus at his best. He had his frequent

relapses into a manner that was not only commonplace, but vulgar. His judgment as a literary critic was rarely at fault when others were in question; moreover, he was most generous in his appreciations; but he lacked the insight and delicacy of taste for self-criticism which he had so readily at command for others.

The Story of Rimini (1816), Hunt's best poem, belongs to his pre-Victorian period. He also wrote *Captain Sword and Captain Pen* (1839), *A Legend of Florence* (1840), *The Palfrey* (1842), *Stories in Verse* (1855), and various others. Wanting though all are in striking originality and the intense note that marks the higher poetry, there was much of the charm yielded by an easy flow of language and of rhyme, a nimble and appropriate fancy, a sensibility that responds readily to the influence of the beautiful, and frequent felicities both of thought and language that linger long and pleasantly in the memory. He deserves especial credit for the grace with which he handled the narrative poem. In all his verse, moreover, is reflected the interesting and, in some respects, fascinating personality of the writer himself—his unconquerable brightness and good-humour, his light-hearted freshness and buoyancy, as of one to whom to live is joy. There is in him none of the strenuousness and introspectiveness of more recent poetry. Easily catching the manner of his favourites, Spenser, Chaucer, and the Italian models whom they followed, he is ever losing himself delightedly in some sweet tale or care-

less scene of old romance. His muse requires no spurring. Poetic pains are to him as nothing compared with poetic pleasures.

Leigh Hunt was the son of a Church of England clergyman, and was born at Southgate, Middlesex, in 1784. After several years at Christ's Hospital, London, followed by a Government clerkship, he began his career as a journalist. It was in connection with the *Examiner* that he fell into the indiscretion of libelling George IV as a 'fat Adonis of fifty.' He was sentenced to a two years' imprisonment, besides other penalties. Instead of moping over this misfortune, Hunt called forth all his native cheerfulness, and gave a memorable object-lesson on the power of making the most of adverse circumstances. He converted his prison cell into a poet's bower. 'I papered the walls,' says he, 'with a trellis of roses; I had the ceiling covered with clouds and sky; the barred windows were screened with Venetian blinds; and when my bookcases were set up, with their busts and flowers, and a pianoforte made its appearance, perhaps there was not a handsomer room on that side the water. I took a pleasure, when a stranger knocked at the door, to see him come in and stare about him. Charles Lamb declared there was no other such room except in a fairy tale.' Hunt was visited in his confinement by Byron, Moore, and a host of other friends, and but for the restraint put upon his movements, the time could scarcely have passed more agreeably or profitably. No doubt there was another side to this easy

good-nature. It is to be seen in the shiftlessness, the want of judgment and practical ability in common affairs, the proneness to fall into debt, and also to forget the obligations thus incurred, which all writers notice in connection with this pleasant man and most genial writer. He died in 1859.

Thomas Hood (1799-1845), like Leigh Hunt, belongs equally to the Victorian period and that which immediately preceded it. The son of a Scotch publisher and bookseller, he was born in London in May 1799. After receiving his education at a private school in Clapham, he was apprenticed as an engraver to his uncle, Mr Sands. His health, however, proving delicate, he was sent in his fifteenth year to Dundee to recruit. Here, among relatives, he remained for several years. During his stay in the northern town, he seems to have had some experience of commercial life, but what is of more interest is the fact that he certainly here made his earliest contributions to the press. The *Dundee Advertiser* received his first contribution in the year 1814, when Hood was fifteen years of age. This appears to have been followed by others, though probably without any serious thoughts of authorship as a vocation. In 1820 we find him once more in London engaged in his old occupation as an engraver. This, however, he soon abandoned, for in 1821 he was serving on the staff of the then popular *London Magazine*. Among his contributions to this magazine in 1821 were the poems, *To Hope*,

Ode to Dr Kitchener, and *Lycus the Centaur*, revealing a capacity for literary labour far beyond the hack work to which so much of his time and energy had recently been given. Between 1821 and 1830, Hood produced much excellent verse, including *The Plea of the Midsummer Fairies* (1827), a work of true and delicate fancy; *Hero and Leander*, many sonnets and lyrics, done with grace and simplicity, and showing fine art and an exquisite tenderness of feeling; and *The Fair Ines*, which has won from other poets the praise of being almost perfect as a ballad. To the later period of his life belong such characteristic works in verse, as *Miss Kilmansegg and her Golden Leg*, *The Dream of Eugene Aram* (1829), *The Song of the Shirt* (1843), and *The Bridge of Sighs* (1844). His high qualities as a poet are distinctly manifested in these and other writings. *Miss Kilmansegg* is a satire in the form of broad burlesque, not without faults of taste, but with vivid dramatic force, realistic imagination, and abounding humour. *The Dream of Eugene Aram* displays the power of conceiving an impressive dramatic situation, and of analysing the intense feelings proper to it. But it is in the other two poems just mentioned that Hood is generally thought to have touched his highest note. With a true instinct he gave instructions that there should be inscribed upon his tomb the words: 'He sang the Song of the Shirt.' That piece, so full of humanity and pathos, appeared in the Christmas number of *Punch* in 1843, and was at once taken to the heart of the British

public. But the fine sympathy and charity of the poet that could see a brother and a sister, even in the most degraded, are shown still more convincingly in *The Bridge of Sighs*, a much finer poem. Had Hood written nothing more than these two poems, he would have been assured against oblivion.

Perhaps the something pathetic in Hood's own life made him the more tenderly sympathetic with others. He had been fortunate in getting in Miss Reynolds one of the best and most loving of wives. The family that grew up around him had added largely to his pleasures. Never, moreover, was there a man to whom home meant more, or who found truer happiness in the exercise of the domestic affections. Still, it was a home over which hung a cloud that never altogether lifted, and that, indeed, darkened more and more in his closing years. The truth is that his life was a constant battle with disease complicated with poverty. The wolf was never fairly driven from his door. Just when there seemed the promise of better days, a bankruptcy in which he was involved plunged him into deeper distress. With a fine manliness he resolved to pay every penny that he owed, but like Scott he died in the attempt. Worse health had come with increased responsibilities and lessened means of comfort. Life abroad was tried for economy's sake. It only made privation harder. The shadow was fast deepening over this gentle life, but the dreary toil for bread could not be intermitted. Release only came with death in 1845, the poet then being in his

forty-sixth year. Many admiring friends and readers gladly contributed to place a handsome monument over his grave in Kensal Green Cemetery, bearing upon it the inscription he had himself chosen. But he had once jocularly suggested a very different epitaph, 'Here lies one who spat more blood and made more puns than any other man.' And in this is condensed the peculiar pathos and irony of Thomas Hood's life. Never, perhaps, was there given to any other man such a constant, spontaneous, irresistible habit of joking. Everything he saw seemed to present itself to him on its humorous side. The quaintest, oddest, most whimsical and grotesque associations of things were for ever offering themselves to him. True poet though he was—and it is to his serious verse we must look for his chief claim to be remembered —it was rather for this perennial fount of humour that his contemporaries in general esteemed him. And alas! there was money in it, and Hood dared not in his circumstances decline the resources which it offered. Much of this humour was singularly unforced, and came bubbling up as from a natural and inexhaustible fountain. Moreover, not a little of it was of that subtler quality that has its obverse in tears, or is shot through with the gleams of a fine poetic fancy. Still nothing can be drearier than very much of this work, both in prose and verse. There were times when the jaded horse would not respond to whip or spur, and these are the times when we feel how willingly we could have spared all his punning to

have had just another *Bridge of Sighs* or *Plea of the Midsummer Fairies.*

Hood, like Thackeray, and indeed beyond Thackeray, had a gift of comic draughtsmanship, of which he made the most ample use in expressing his humorous fancies and whimsicalities. He is to be seen in all his lighter gifts in the various series of the *Comic Annual*, *Hood's Own*, *Whims and Oddities*, and *Up the Rhine.* Altogether we may say of him that great though he was as a humourist, he was above all a true, though not a great poet, with a capability in this direction far beyond anything which the adverse circumstances of his life had permitted him to produce.

The following piece in Hood's serious manner refers to his sister Anne:

THE DEATHBED.

We watch'd her breathing through the night,
  Her breathing soft and low,
As in her breast the wave of life
  Kept heaving to and fro.

So silently we seem'd to speak,
  So slowly moved about,
As we had lent her half our powers
  To eke her living out.

Our very hopes belied our fears,
  Our fears our hopes belied—
We thought her dying when she slept,
  And sleeping when she died.

For when the morn came dim and sad,
  And chill with early showers,
Her quiet eyelids closed—she had
  Another morn than ours.

Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1809-1892). In the opinion of the vast majority of English-speaking readers throughout the world, Alfred Tennyson is the chief ornament of British poetry in the Victorian era. He forms a link between the group of extraordinary poets whose genius sheds such lustre on the first quarter of the century and those of the decades following. Scott, Southey, Wordsworth, and Coleridge were all alive when Tennyson published his earliest volumes, and the commendations of the two latter, studiously cautious and measured though they were, may be said to have put upon him the true hall mark of the long and brilliant succession of great masters of English song. He is our representative Victorian poet, and to no one can we better look for the distinctive thought, the characteristic moods, and the new developments of recent and present-day verse.

Alfred Tennyson was born on the 6th of August 1809, in the rectory of Somersby, a sleepy hamlet in Lincolnshire. On both sides he was of gentle blood. His father, the Rev. George Clayton Harrison Tennyson, LL.D., the rector of this small parish of sixty or seventy souls, was a man of superior character, culture, and attainments, with gifts of imagination that enabled him to discern and foster the germs of great qualities in his children. His wife, daughter of the Rev. Stephen Fytche, Vicar of Louth, by her extraordinary gentleness and tenderness of disposition, furnished the true complement to her husband's strong and masterful personality. Alfred was the fourth son in this

family of twelve, his two elder surviving brothers being Frederick and Charles, both of whom also distinguished themselves as poets. Like the Brontë children, although in more genial circumstances, the young Tennysons lived a vivid imaginative life, and appear to have done much for each other. Mrs Thackeray Ritchie relates that Alfred, when a child of five, being driven along the garden path before a blast of wind, made his first line of poetry, as he shouted, 'I hear a voice that's speaking in the wind.' Other tales are told of his childhood that at least show his early devotion to poetry, if they do not furnish evidence of any remarkable precocity. On the death of his grandmother, his grandfather asked him to write a poem on this event. When the verses were submitted to him, he presented the boy with half a sovereign, accompanied, however, with the discouraging remark, 'That is the first money, my boy, that you've made by poetry; and take my word for it—*it* will be the last!'

Education was begun at Somersby, but in 1816 Alfred, then seven years of age, and his brother Charles, one year older, were sent to the Grammar School at Louth, where they remained till 1820. From the latter year till 1828 they received the home tuition of their father in preparation for the University. It was, no doubt, a fruitful period, singularly free from restraint and full of poetical opportunities. But it afforded openings for no little idleness, and with a nature so excessively shy and reserved as

Tennyson's, it was a misfortune that he had not at this time the rough discipline of public school life. As it was, he was fortunate in his surroundings, and especially in finding in his brother a true companion of the soul, with tastes and sympathies akin to his own. Throughout this period the Tennyson of later years can be distinctly traced—dreamy, imaginative, solitary, much given to abstracted commerce with Nature and self. It may have been, it probably was, somewhat unhealthy; but the poems furnish evidence enough of a habit of closely interrogating Nature, and an appreciation of the distinctive features especially of the Lincolnshire landscape, that must have been acquired during the long rambles of the brothers at this time.

In his twelfth year Alfred is said to have composed an epic of four or five thousand lines in imitation of Scott, and somewhat later he tried his hand at a drama. In 1824, when he was fifteen, the news of Byron's death filtered slowly to the remote hamlet of Somersby, and filled our youthful poets with consternation. 'I thought,' said Alfred, 'the whole world was at an end. I thought everything was over and finished for everyone—that nothing else mattered. I remember I walked out alone, and carved "Byron is dead" into the sandstone.'

In 1827, about two years after this event, there was published at Louth a small volume entitled *Poems by Two Brothers*, forming the first literary venture of Alfred and Charles Tennyson. The object of this

publication was to obtain pocket money for a long holiday, and it must have more than met their expectations, for the sanguine publisher appears to have given them in all about twenty pounds for the copyright. Of the one hundred and two poems which the volume contained, four were from the pen of the older brother Frederick, who has continued to write poetry throughout a long life, but has had the misfortune to be eclipsed by the greater genius of the younger members of the family. The first feeling of any one on reading *Poems by Two Brothers*, will probably be one of surprise that they are not better than they are. For when all allowances on the score of youth—and the youthful poets are careful in their preface to tell us that these poems were written between the ages of fifteen and eighteen—have been made, it must be confessed that they do not show any remarkable power, or give any reasonable promise of future greatness. Even Byron's *Hours of Idleness*, which was manifestly much in their view when they wrote, compares in this respect favourably with them. Their interest is chiefly retrospective, in view of Alfred Tennyson's supreme distinction in Victorian poetry at a later period, and of the fact that Charles Tennyson, better known afterwards as the Rev. Charles Tennyson-Turner, a name assumed when he fell heir to his grand-uncle's property, became one of the most exquisite sonnet writers of our time.

In 1828 these two brothers were entered at Trinity College, Cambridge, Alfred being then in his eighteenth

year. Notwithstanding his extraordinary shyness and reserve, he soon found admittance into one of the best sets in the University. Foremost among his friends was Arthur Henry Hallam, two years younger than himself, but better equipped in scholarship and knowledge, and, according to the testimony of all his friends, of a singularly beautiful and perfect character. Of the same set were Richard Monckton Milnes (afterwards Lord Houghton), R. C. Trench, who became Archbishop of Dublin, Henry Alford, the future Dean of Canterbury, Mr Spedding, F. D. Maurice, Charles Merivale, the historian of Rome, W. H. Thompson, subsequently Master of Trinity, and others. Thackeray was also at Cambridge at this time, but was of a different set. The friendship of the young men composing the Tennysonian group was very close. Yet even with them the super-sensitiveness to adverse criticism, which in the laureate amounted almost to a disease, is distinctly marked. Archbishop Trench has told how Tennyson used to read his poems to these assembled friends, only, however, with the understanding that no word of fault-finding was to be expressed, although there seems to have been no law against the utterance of unqualified approbation.

The one noteworthy academical achievement of the future laureate was *Timbuctoo* (1829), a poem in blank verse, which obtained the Chancellor's Medal, even against such formidable competitors as Monckton Milnes and the younger Hallam. Tennyson was still

an undergraduate of Cambridge, when in 1830 he published his *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical*, a volume which shows a considerable advance upon former work, but which, nevertheless, is strangely unsuggestive of such later poems as *Maud*, *Rizpah*, and *In Memoriam*. There were, however, in these new productions qualities which justified both the enthusiasm of such critics as Hallam, and the objections of critics, not altogether unfriendly, like Professor Wilson. All can feel the sweetness, the melody, and the varied charm of these poems without being blind to their slightness, their want of clear, definite thought, or the absence in them of any strong note of passion. The Claribels and Lilians, the Adelines and Isabels, with whom so much of this volume is filled, and whom the poet paints with such delicate porcelain effects, are without much human interest, and, in fact, fail to reveal themselves. *Mariana* is one of the finest poems in this volume, but even Mariana of the Moated Grange in her solitude and melancholy is vague and indistinct, although one of the most characteristic qualities of the poet is shown in depicting how all the various features of the fen-like landscape take a sombre tone in sympathy with Mariana's sadness. In *The Poet* he touches a higher note, and shows less immaturity.

In this year, Tennyson's more practical interests are to be seen in his visit in company with his friend Hallam to the Pyrenees, for the purpose of conveying money and sympathy to certain rebels then in arms against the Spanish authorities. In the following year,

1831, he lost his father, and in consequence left Cambridge without taking a degree. His next volume of *Poems* appeared in 1832, and showed decided growth in the qualities in which hitherto he had been weakest. The vague, dreamy languors of melody and colour are still noticeable, but the motive is not so thin, and the human interests are growing stronger. It was possible for all readers to be interested in, and charmed by the idyllic beauty of *The Miller's Daughter*, and the tender pathos of *The May Queen*. There is but little of the old dilettante prettiness in the passion of *Fatima* and *The Sisters*. In *The Palace of Art*, the problems of the age begin to make themselves heard, and it is interesting to note that here at the beginning, as also at the end of his career, Tennyson answers the question, 'Is life worth living?' with a decided 'Yes.' The finely melodious, richly coloured *Lady of Shalott* shows him to be already under the spell of the Arthurian legend. How vivid its nature pictures are, and how true to the particular human mood of which each is the background!

'On either side the river lie
Long fields of barley and of rye,
That clothe the wold and meet the sky;
And thro' the field the road runs by
To many-tower'd Camelot;
And up and down the people go,
Gazing where the lilies blow
Round an island there below,
The island of Shalott.

'Willows whiten, aspens quiver,
Little breezes dusk and shiver

Thro' the wave that runs for ever
By the island in the river
Flowing down to Camelot.
Four grey walls, and four grey towers,
Overlook a space of flowers,
And the silent isle imbowers
The Lady of Shalott.

'By the margin, willow-veil'd,
Slide the heavy barges trail'd
By slow horses; and unhail'd
The shallop flitteth, silken-sail'd,
Skimming down to Camelot:
But who hath seen her wave her hand?
Or at the casement seen her stand?
Or is she known in all the land,
The Lady of Shalott?

'Only reapers, reaping early
In among the bearded barley,
Hear a song that echoes cheerly
From the river winding clearly,
Down to tower'd Camelot:
And by the moon the reaper weary,
Piling sheaves in uplands airy,
Listening, whispers, "'Tis the fairy
Lady of Shalott."'

But the principal significance of this poem is, that it furnishes a landmark in the history of the poet's own mental development, in showing that he has now reached the perception that a noble life can never satisfy itself with a mere isolated dreaming of dreams, however beautiful, but must go forth in helpful sympathy with its fellows of humanity. In *The Dream of Fair Women* there are some fine passages; and an almost flawless beauty of melody and cadence is

reached in *The Lotos-Eaters*. But precious though such poetic material was, the notices of this volume were by no means generally favourable. Tennyson deeply resented them. But as the fount of inspiration in him is always less impressive than his supreme attainment as an artist, these criticisms probably served a good purpose. For seeing that Tennyson, notwithstanding his annoyance, withdrew many of the offending poems from future editions, and altered many others almost beyond recognition, we may presume that the strictures of such writers as Professor Wilson and John Gibson Lockhart were not altogether unnecessary.

For the ten following years, Tennyson's voice was silent. But the laborious craftsman—and he was that as well as born singer—no great poet ever more so—was toiling unrestingly to make himself the poet his friends and well-wishers expected him to be. His mental development was not rapid. It extended over many years. And even at the last it is impossible to say how much of the final result was due to natural growth, and how much to self-discipline and effort. In any case we know how powerfully both were reinforced by the inspiration of the great sorrow of his earlier life. Arthur Henry Hallam had become more and more his friend. They had had long days at Somersby together, and when Hallam became engaged to Tennyson's sister Emily, the ties between them grew still more close and intimate. But Hallam died suddenly at Vienna on the 15th of September 1833, and the sun of Tennyson's youth seemed to go down

in blackness. To Arthur Henry Hallam belongs the interest not only of Tennyson's great love and imperishable memorial, but also of an unfulfilled career in literature that promised to be of unusual brilliance and distinction. Many years were spent by Tennyson in brooding over this great sorrow, and in silently perfecting his poems to the most exquisite symmetry and beauty.

When at length in 1842, he, being then thirty-one years of age, breaks silence with the famous edition of his *Poems* in two volumes, he is in every sense a man. The cloudlands of his youth, in which he has lingered only too long, now lie behind him. He has found a message for both the brain and the heart of his generation, and from that time onwards to his death, the age continues to listen to him as to one who has justly earned for himself the position of the greatest of living poets. In no other writer have we such singular opportunities of viewing the development of his own taste and art. These volumes distinctly showed the hand of the refiner in numerous transformations in old pieces. It is indeed most instructive thus to compare the various versions of the same poems marking the different stages of the poet's growth, and to note both what he adds and what he rejects. Never was there a taste more fastidious; never an artist who so insisted upon absolute perfection in his work.

Tennyson's manner of working may here be noted as somewhat peculiar. His custom, as he tells us,

was to put down beautiful thoughts, jewelled words or phrases, striking comparisons, and descriptions of Nature just as they occurred to him in the course of his reading, his country rambles, or his silent meditations, and to treasure these up until a favourable opportunity of using them arose. Many of his best things, therefore, are of the nature of beautiful mosaics —mosaics, however, fitted with such an exquisite art into his pictures of Nature or of man, that they seem to evolve themselves immediately and spontaneously from the main current of his thought. Had the whole result been less perfect, there might have been some temptation to suspect that the poem had no better *raison d'être* than the exquisite phrase or fancy held in reserve so long. In any case it is at least curious to see so much of what may be called mechanic art in alliance with so undoubted a genius.

That genius was largely imitative. It made its appropriations freely. His models could easily be recognised, and not a few of his choicest beauties can be shown to be derivative. Yet nothing can be more absurd than to seek to found upon such things a charge of plagiarism. Like Shakespeare, Tennyson often shows to greatest advantage when the old thought or fancy is placed side by side with the new and exquisite setting he has given it.

The first of the two volumes published in 1842 was made up mainly of pieces that had appeared before, some of them slightly altered, most of them entirely recast. The second volume consisted of new pieces,

which showed a great advance upon his former work, and had the effect of establishing his reputation upon a more secure foundation. The English Idyll, which had already in Tennyson's hands found exquisitely beautiful expression in *The Miller's Daughter* and *The May Queen*, is even more strongly represented here in *The Gardener's Daughter* and *Dora*. These pieces, the former glowing with a true and passionate love, the latter even more perfect in the tender naturalness of its pathos, can scarcely fail to charm the reader by their thoroughly English sentiment and atmosphere, and by the sweet and wholesome human affection they display. We see the influence which the old Greek myths had upon the imagination of the poet in *Ulysses*, which, classical though it is in subject and in treatment, yet has its undercurrents of modern sentiment: it depicts the ancient hero as wearied almost to death of the idleness of home, and as setting forth upon a new enterprise. The attractions of old romance are seen in the beautiful legend of Godiva, which surely was never rendered more purely or sympathetically. The Arthurian legend, however, still holds the chief place in his affection, as witness *Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere*, *Sir Galahad*, and *The Morte d'Arthur*. Even more characteristic of the poet's advance are the poems that shed light on his ethical position and his relation to the great religious problems of the age. *The Two Voices* is even more interesting for its philosophy than for its poetry. The contest of the two voices is respecting the great problem—*Is*

Life worth living? and vague though the issue is felt to be, the conclusion is undoubtedly the affirmative of the optimist. This, however, is implied rather than stated in these concluding verses :—

'And forth into the fields I went,
And Nature's living motion lent
The pulse of hope to discontent.

'I wondered at the bounteous hours,
The slow result of winter showers;
You scarce could see the grass for flowers.

'I wonder'd while I paced along:
The woods were filled so full with song,
There seem'd no room for sense of wrong.

'And all so variously wrought,
I marvell'd how the mind was brought
To anchor by one gloomy thought;

'And wherefore rather I made choice
To commune with that barren voice,
Than him that said, "Rejoice! Rejoice!"'

The highly allegorical *Vision of Sin*, vague though its conclusions also are, gives emphatic expression to the significant truth that the sin of the sense brings its certain punishment in the sense :—

'Then some one spake—Behold! it was a crime
Of sense avenged by sense that wore with time.'

Of all these 1842 poems *Locksley Hall* was the most popular, and gave the greatest impression of strength and progress. It is full of beautiful things, like most of the other poems, but it also shows a dramatic power

and passion which Tennyson had never reached before. It describes a love killed by the disillusion due to a girl's fickleness. The hero and speaker is a boy, and his passion of disappointment, scorn, and anger is the passion of a boy. As in *Maud*, the feeling is somewhat morbid and hysterical, and the curses into which this feeling breaks show a mind far from its poise. His has been the selfishness of a golden youth intoxicated with its own bright dreams and exquisite emotions. Bitter experience is necessary to teach him how deceptive and unsubstantial these are, how little the happiness of the individual counts for, and how much nobler as an object of enthusiasm is the welfare of the race. He thus awakes to the fact that relief from all this maddening turbulence of feeling that threatens to paralyse his nature, or to land him in the deadly chill of cynicism, must be found in action, in a living sympathy with human progress, and in the hastening on of the better world to be.

How admirably fitted are the wide sweep and melodious cadence of the lines of this poem to express the exquisite beauty of some of its moods, and the rushing flaming passion of others! As we read, we seem both to see and to hear the long roll of some tropic wave advancing upon a golden strand, and breaking into innumerable flashing liquid gems. What, for example, could more beautifully describe an imaginative youth than such lines as these?—

'Many a night from yonder ivied casement, ere I went to rest,
Did I look on great Orion sloping slowly to the west.

'Many a night I saw the Pleiads, rising through the mellow shade,
Glitter like a swarm of fire-flies tangled in a silver braid.

'Here about the beach I wander'd, nourishing a youth sublime
With the fairy tales of science, and the long result of Time.'

Into what an ecstasy does he pass when he knows that his love is returned :—

'Love took up the glass of Time, and turn'd it in his glowing hands:
Every moment, lightly shaken, ran itself in golden sands.

'Love took up the harp of Life, and smote on all the chords with might;
Smote the chord of Self, that, trembling, pass'd in music out of sight.

'Many a morning on the moorland did we hear the copses ring,
And her whisper throng'd my pulses with the fulness of the Spring.

'Many an evening by the waters did we watch the stately ships,
And our spirits rush'd together at the touching of the lips.'

But it is here in the very moment of supreme bliss that fate reaches him; his next words, therefore, are the bitter cry :—

'O my cousin, shallow-hearted! O my Amy, mine no more!
O the dreary, dreary moorland! O the barren, barren shore!'

He has been thrust aside for an older and richer suitor. We sympathise with an agony so real and natural. But we can see that the feeling is not profound. He will be consoled. He will hurl about his anathemas with a self-conscious violence and bluster. But he will soon be able to comfort himself with the thought—

'That a poet's crown of sorrow is remembering happier things.'

He will certainly escape from the self-centred heroics of his youth, of which these sorrows are a part. Already, indeed, he has gone far and learned much when he is able to say—

> 'Yet I doubt not thro' the ages one increasing purpose runs,
> And the thoughts of men are widen'd with the process of the suns.'

The best, however, that this experience has done for him is expressed in the words:

> 'Knowledge comes, but wisdom lingers, and I linger on the shore,
> And the individual withers, and the world is more and more.'

For at last the audacity of youthful egotism has found its rebuke and has signed its recantation; the true formula of a noble life being not 'All things for me,' but 'I and my powers the servants of all.' This would seem to be a fitting conclusion, but the poet is not clear, and it may be that he meant nothing more by this poem than to exhibit the effervescence of a fermenting spirit in which the crystal of a solid, useful purpose has not yet been formed.

One turns with interest to *Locksley Hall, Sixty Years After*, written by Tennyson in his old age, to see what bearing it has upon the problems of experience touched upon by the earlier poem. On the whole the result is disappointing. The later poem lacks something of the imaginative power, the rushing energy, and the verbal brilliancy of the 1842 poem. The hero, now in talk with his grandson, is more

than eighty years of age, but in some respects he is still the boy he was sixty years ago. He has not lost the power of cursing, and has bitter comments for those who do not please him. Still the mellowing touch of time has been upon him. Amy, dead sixty years ago, is to him now a tender and sacred memory. Her husband, a widower of sixty years, he acknowledges to have been a better man than himself.

We miss the generous faith in human progress, and the glowing enthusiasms of his youth. After those early storms, life had rocked him in tranquil domestic waters. His lot had been cast, not among the fevered throngs of men, but amidst pleasant, easy-going rusticities. The human needs that clamoured for repose, got it not from him, but from his ancient rival. He has grown painfully pessimistic and conservative. He sees the evils of society still, but thinks that men must be content to live their miserable lives here as best they may, and take their compensations in the life to come. Such a philosophy of life is manifestly inadequate, and even although it illustrates a temperament, one rather wonders that Tennyson, with apparently so poor a message, should have recurred, after so long a time, to this unsatisfactory hero.

Tennyson's life now becomes fuller and richer from the opportunities arising out of his residence in and near London, of associating with men worth knowing. Especially valuable and stimulating to him

was his friendship with Carlyle. In 1838, Tennyson had joined the Anonymous Club, which numbered amongst its members Carlyle, Mill, Sterling, Thackeray, Landor, Macready, and others. The friendship of such men could not fail to widen the poet's range, and quicken his intellectual sympathies. He is now, therefore, less self-centred than before, and the human interest has for him a stronger appeal. From various pens we have distinct glimpses of his tall, handsome, swarthy, gipsy-like figure, and can form some idea of the deep-voiced, monotonous chant with which he used to read his poems to his friends. Edward Fitzgerald writes:—'We have Alfred Tennyson here, very droll and very wayward; and much sitting up of nights till two and three in the morning, with pipes in our mouths; at which good hour we would get Alfred to give us some of his magic music, which he does between growling and smoking,—and so to bed.' But Carlyle's portrait places him even more vividly before us: 'A great shock of rough, dusty-dark hair; bright, laughing, hazel eyes; massive aquiline face, most massive, yet most delicate; of sallow-brown complexion, almost Indian-looking; clothes cynically loose, free and easy; smokes infinite tobacco. His voice is musically metallic—fit for loud laughter and piercing wail, and all that may lie between; speech and speculation free and plenteous; I do not meet, in these late decades, such company over a pipe.' In the Chelsea household, Tennyson appears to have been a special favourite, and there

can be little doubt that the hours spent there reacted powerfully upon his work.

In 1845 the circumstances of the poet were made easier by a Civil List pension conferred upon him by Sir Robert Peel, chiefly through the good offices of Monckton Milnes, who sent a copy of Tennyson's poems to the Prime Minister with *Locksley Hall* and *Ulysses* marked. Tennyson's first long poem, *The Princess*, characterised as *A Medley*, appeared in 1847. In a mood half-serious, half-burlesque, he discussed in this poem a problem that has advanced many stages since that time—the problem of woman's position in society. This question, moreover, he answers in the only way in which it can be answered, by pointing to the child. Not colleges or halls of learning can be the centre of the woman's kingdom, but the home, so Nature teaches. *The Princess* is full of Tennyson's best qualities—his melody of verse, his playfulness, his art of vivid portraiture, his exquisite lyrical gift, shown especially in the beautiful songs added to a later edition.

The year 1850, Tennyson's golden year, witnessed three important events—his marriage to Emily Selwood, whose youngest sister was already wife to his brother Charles; his appointment to the Laureateship in succession to Wordsworth; and the publication of *In Memoriam*. There are many who reckon this his greatest poem, and see in it his finest thought and most perfect art. Two things, however, will prevent it from being so widely popular as some of his other

works. In the first place, it is a long poem, and is throughout of a sombre and melancholy cast. In the second place, it is, of all his poems, that which makes the heaviest demand upon the thoughtfulness of his readers, and is not to be understood, therefore, without considerable effort. It takes the form of a hundred and thirty-one separate poems, 'all springing out of variations of the same mood of grief,' and using a stanza, the exquisite modulations of which seem almost perfectly adapted to the poet's purpose. *In Memoriam* celebrates the virtues of his dead friend, Arthur Henry Hallam, and has been rightly characterised as the greatest of all poems in which a grief and its effects are chronicled. It shows us the poet shadowed by the awful mystery of death. Something like despair seizes him as he reflects on the waste implied in the sudden arrest of a career so full of rarest promise as that of his friend. There seems no room for God and love in a universe where such death prevails. Spectral shapes haunt him with the gloomiest forebodings. His faith seems on the point of shipwreck. The persistent 'wherefores?' that rise to his lips refuse to answer themselves. Yet slowly, with the dragging years, the long night of his sorrow passes into the glimmering of dawn. The shadows disperse; he can hear once more the singing of birds; again he catches sight of the blue over-arching heavens: now the dawn has grown into the full sunlight of hope, and the calmness and serenity of a faith that does not know indeed, but can trust. *In Memoriam* is furnished

with a Prologue and an Epilogue. The latter was added at a later time, and expresses the poet's joy at the marriage of his youngest sister, Cecilia, to Professor Lushington. The Prologue is dated 1849, and was written several years after the rest of the poem was finished. Placed where it is, this most beautiful and impressive religious hymn sounds the true key-note of *In Memoriam*, by showing that, however black may be the gulfs of doubt into which sorrow may plunge the poet, the end will be peace. Such stanzas as the following belong to the supreme moments both of poetry and of faith :—

'Strong Son of God, immortal Love,
Whom we, that have not seen thy face,
By faith, and faith alone, embrace,
Believing where we cannot prove;

. . . . . .

'Thou wilt not leave us in the dust:
Thou madest man, he knows not why,
He thinks he was not made to die;
And thou hast made him: thou art just.

. . . . . .

'Our little systems have their day;
They have their day and cease to be:
They are but broken lights of thee,
And thou, O Lord, art more than they.

'We have but faith: we cannot know;
For knowledge is of things we see;
And yet we trust it comes from thee,
A beam in darkness: let it grow.'

In the years that followed *In Memoriam*, a patriotic sentiment appears to prevail in Tennyson's poetry.

In 1852 he produced his splendid *Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington*. This was followed in 1854 by *The Charge of the Light Brigade*. The mood was with the poet to the last, and finds strong expression in such later poems as *Balaclava*, *The Revenge*, and *The Defence of Lucknow*. The next great poem from Tennyson's pen—also illustrating the war spirit—was *Maud: a Monodrama*, which appeared in 1855. Of all his poems this was the author's favourite, but it was by no means equally admired by the public. It is true that the critics are now very nearly of Tennyson's opinion; for while they still find fault with its defence of war, its intrusion of scientific elements, and its occasional lapses into rhetoric, they admit that it is the most dramatic, and in some respects the most poetical, of all his writings. It glows throughout with the white heat of passion, and scarcely anywhere else have we such a wealth of lyrical sweetness and variety. The imaginative passion and melody of the song, *Come into the Garden, Maud*, would of itself have sufficed to place it among the finest poems of the century. The moody and hysterical hero reminds the reader of the hero of *Locksley Hall*, and it is with his over-strained emotions, sane and insane, that the poem is mainly occupied. Maud herself is somewhat feebly conceived, and figures but slightly in the events of the poem. It is no sorrow such as the poet has described in *In Memoriam* that is here depicted. It is the sorrow, fateful and inevitable, that follows

a diseased temperament, splenetic, nervous, only half sane at the best, and stung to unnatural excitement by the memory of old, but unforgotten wrongs. Into this brooding life is interjected an idyllic love, only to be quenched in overwhelming disaster. The issue is from the first seen to be inevitable. Through all the thrilling rapture of the garden song is heard remotely, but distinctly, the wail of approaching doom. In a passion of self-defence the hero kills Maud's brother, and becomes a fugitive, haunted not only by her living shriek, but also by her dead presence. Vividly does the poet describe first the morbid fancies of the tottering brain, and then the forms of the madness itself. Recovery comes, but in a manner that is scarcely convincing. For it is the Crimean War that brings to him deliverance from the phantoms that have haunted him so long, and that enables him in recovered sanity to exclaim :

> 'It is better to fight for the good than to rail at the ill,
> I have felt with my native land, I am one with my kind,
> I embrace the purpose of God, and the doom assigned.'

The conclusion will not satisfy every taste, and undoubtedly the poet, in finding the remedy for the evils consequent on a long period of peace in a great war, runs counter to the logic of facts in overlooking the unimaginable horrors of such a conflict.

Tennyson's next great work, *The Idylls of the King*, was built up slowly between the years 1859 and 1885. But as we have seen from such poems

as *Sir Galahad*, *Launcelot and Guinevere*, and *The Lady of Shalott*, the subject of the dim King and his shadowy Court had cast its spell upon Tennyson long before. It was, indeed, his life study. His first serious effort in connection with it was put forth in the 1842 volume, in the poem entitled *Morte d'Arthur*, which he afterwards expanded into *The Passing of Arthur*, to complete the poetical cycle of the Table Round. It was thus in some respects the first, as it was also in its perfected form the finest, of the series. When these poems were published separately, and out of their chronological order, they had seemed to lack unity. But when the whole work was completed, and arranged in the due order of time and events, and it was possible to view them according to the poet's design, it was seen that they presented an epical and artistic completeness, for which hitherto they had not received credit.

The story of Arthur and his Court as told by Malory and earlier writers is pretty closely adhered to. But into this story has been woven the significance of a deeper spiritual allegory. For in Tennyson's hands Arthur is the soul, his Knights are its various capacities and powers, and Guinevere his Queen is Sense, whose single sin involves the Soul with which she is in union, and all the goodly brotherhood of the Table Round in swift decay and final dissolution. Taking these poems in the order of time, and not of publication, the first is *The Coming of Arthur*, in

which is described the dim mystery of his birth, the setting up of his throne, and the founding of the Order of the Table Round :

> 'And Arthur sat
> Crown'd on the dais, and his warriors cried,
> "Be thou the King, and we will work thy will
> Who love thee." Then the King in low deep tones,
> And simple words of great authority,
> Bound them by so straight vows to his own self,
> That when they rose, knighted from kneeling, some
> Were pale as at the passing of a ghost,
> Some flush'd, and others dazed, as one who wakes
> Half-blinded at the coming of a light.
> But when he spake and cheer'd his Table Round
> With large, divine, and comfortable words,
> Beyond my tongue to tell thee—I beheld
> From eye to eye thro' all their Order flash
> A momentary likeness of the King.'

The King's marriage to Guinevere follows, and becomes the occasion of a renewed consecration to the high and sacred purposes of his reign.

> 'And holy Dubric spread his hands and spake,
> "Reign ye, and live and love, and make the world
> Other, and may the Queen be one with thee,
> And all this Order of thy Table Round
> Fulfil the boundless purpose of their King!"'

Whereupon Arthur's knights burst into song that expresses the very ecstasy of heroical and heavenly resolve :

> 'Strike for the King and live! his knights have heard
> That God hath told the King a secret word.
> Fall battle-axe, and flash brand! Let the King reign.
> . . . . . .

'Strike for the King and die! and if thou diest,
The King is King, and ever wills the highest.
Clang battle-axe, and clash brand! Let the King reign.

. . . . . .

'The King will follow Christ, and we the King
In whom high God hath breathed a secret thing.
Fall battle-axe, and flash brand! Let the King reign.

. . . . . .

'And Arthur and his knighthood for a space
Were all one will, and thro' that strength the King
Drew in the petty princedoms under him,
Fought, and in twelve great battles overcame
The heathen hordes, and made a realm and reigned.'

In *Gareth and Lynette* no canker in the goodly fellowship has yet appeared. The edge of that fine enthusiasm has not yet been blunted. Each vies with each in deeds of loftiest prowess and noblest chivalry. To all, the example of the King is still an inspiration. What, indeed, to Gareth and the rest is life itself but to

'Follow the Christ, the King,
Live pure, speak true, right wrong, follow the King—
Else, wherefore born?'

Next in the order of time come *The Marriage of Geraint*, and *Geraint and Enid*, which in the first edition of the *Idylls* had formed one poem under the name of *Enid*. Alas! the 'little rift within the lute' has now appeared. Whispers of the Queen's unfaithfulness are abroad. Geraint hears and believes them:

'and there fell
A horror on him, lest his gentle wife,

> Thro' that great tenderness for Guinevere,
> Had suffer'd, or should suffer, any taint
> In nature.'

Unhappily the fear for his wife passes into causeless suspicion. What wonder when the rose of that fair Court, one so high in place and privilege as the Queen, could be so false? Sad for Geraint and Enid is the weary time that follows, although it serves only to make more plain the prowess of the great Prince of Devon, and to place high above all doubt the exceeding loyalty, virtue, and meekness of his sweet wife.

The working of this evil leaven is even more distinctly traceable in *Balin and Balan*. This idyll was not published till 1885, and the purpose of it seems to be to accentuate the shadows that are now gathering around the good King, and to introduce *Merlin and Vivien*. Merlin, the sage, the weird enchanter of the Table Round, master of all knowledge, and projector of all the mighty works of Arthur's kingdom, symbolises perfect wisdom and intellectual force, unrooted in spiritual power. He comes before us in the poem, shadowed by a presentiment of approaching evil. Only too plainly he sees what as yet the great King, wrapt in the splendid isolation of his high aims, does not see, that the glory of his kingdom is departing. Thus anticipating from day to day

> 'A doom that ever poised itself to fall,'

Merlin becomes melancholy and depressed, seeing

> 'The meanest having power upon the highest,
> And the high purpose broken by the worm.'

It was a presage too signally to be fulfilled in his own undoing. The subtle, shameless Vivien attaches herself to him when he is thus depressed and least capable of resistance, brings to bear upon him all the armoury of her wiles, and leaves him not, until, despoiled of his secret,

> 'In the hollow oak he lay as dead,
> And lost to life and use and name and fame.'

The beautiful and touching story of *Lancelot and Elaine* is next told, and here we reach the core of all this mystery of evil that is marring the fairest structure of noble purpose ever formed. The Lady of Shalott once again comes before us, but now it is as 'the lily maid of Astolat;' and surely sweeter picture of maidenly purity, loveliness, and innocence, never offered itself to human view. So thought Lancelot:

> 'He look'd, and more amazed
> Than if seven men had set upon him, saw
> The maiden standing in the dewy light,
> He had not dream'd she was so beautiful,
> Then came on him a sort of sacred fear,
> For silent, tho' he greeted her, she stood
> Rapt on his face as if it were a god's.'

At first sight she loves Lancelot, not knowing who he is, nor knowing it is love, and when she learns her love is hopeless, sweetly dies, as she has sweetly lived.

But the poem is chiefly remarkable for the clear light it throws upon the character of Lancelot, the greatest, goodliest knight of Arthur's Court, and on his guilty relations to the Queen. Despite his sin,

Lancelot, in virtue of his great prowess and his sweet and gracious courtesy, is still, next to the King, the noblest knight of the Table Round. No fight that he has waged with sword and shield has left such marks upon him as remorse for his faithlessness to the King, whom nevertheless he reveres and worships almost as a god. Sense taking the form of the Queen's glorious beauty, has for the time crushed his better part of man, but has not finally subdued him. He still has the grace to reverence the high purpose of the King, and to loathe himself because a base passion and a meaner aim have so far withdrawn him from it. Here, in Elaine's sweet womanhood, are offered to him purity of life, honesty and nobility of purpose, the happiness of a serene, pure love. But sense and a sentiment of honour to the Queen prevail. Fain would he break the bonds, but cannot, as he thinks. It is a perfectly human picture—human in its strength and in its weakness.

In Queen Guinevere we decline to a lower level. At this time the guilty love suffices her. The torture of remorse that so mars the visage of Lancelot does not trouble her. She, too, knows the greatness and the goodness of the King, her husband; but his very goodness repels her.

> 'That passionate perfection, my good Lord—
> But who can gaze upon the sun in heaven?
> He never spake word of reproach to me,
> He never had a glimpse of mine untruth,
> He cares not for me.'

'To me
He is all fault who hath no fault at all:
For who loves me must have a touch of earth;
The low sun makes the colour.'

The poem closes in shadow, with the expression of Lancelot's remorseful pain.

The Holy Grail follows, and shows us the monkish spirit of mysticism invading the Table Round, much to Arthur's regret and annoyance. In his absence, his knights have taken a vow to rest not until their eyes have seen the holy thing, the mystic dish from which the Saviour partook at the Last Supper, brought, as men say, to Glastonbury by Joseph of Arimathea. They are foredoomed to failure in their quest, all except Sir Galahad, who alone of all the knights is pure: such the declension from the high estate of holiness in which their goodly fellowship was founded. Sad at heart, the King foresees the sundering of the Order, the places of his knights vacant at his side, whilst they, following wandering fires, are lost in the quagmire, many of them, yea most, to return no more.

Pelleas and Ettarre tells how the King makes new knights to fill the gap thus left by the Holy Quest, how Pelleas glowing with the ardours of a pure and noble youth is admitted to this fellowship, how setting forth to achieve his knightly endeavours, carrying the Queen in his heart as the symbol of all womanly excellence, he is fooled by Ettarre, taunted with the Queen's misdoings, so that the enthusiasms of his

fervid soul go down before the conviction that there is neither truth in man nor honour in woman.

Still more darkly do the shadows fall over Arthur's Court in *The Last Tournament.* The little rift within the lute has now grown very wide. Even the unconscious King suspects in the bearing of his knights :—

> 'A glance
> That only seems half-loyal to command,—
> A manner somewhat fall'n from reverence'—
> 'Or,' says he, 'have I dream'd the bearing of our Knights
> Tells of a manhood ever less and lower?
> Or whence the fear lest this my realm uprear'd
> By noble deeds at one with noble vows,
> From flat confusion and brute violences,
> Reel back into the beast, and be no more?'

For the last time the lists are set at Camelot, and Lancelot, sitting in the judge's chair, notes how the old laws of the tourney are violated, how courage and high courtesy, the gentleness of knights towards each other, and their chivalrous respect for the fair, are declined and indeed departed. The Queen, too, in the revels that succeed, is pained to see in the ladies of her Court loud colours and a boisterous mirth instead of the old simplicity, grace, and self-respect of manners and of dress. And it is borne home to both the Queen and Lancelot, that theirs is the evil example that has led to all this sad decline. The tale that follows is one of brutal violence and the basest passions, and we are conscious of some impatience in passing to *Guinevere*, the next of the Idylls, that we may at once

see the end of a society that seemed so fair, and has, alas! sunk so low.

The King is still absent on his wars, and the Queen, remorseful now as well as Lancelot, sees that the storm will soon burst upon them. Their fault is known; bitter enemies like Modred and Vivien are ever on the watch and plotting for their ruin. On the persuasion of the Queen, Lancelot exchanges with her a last farewell, and they part weeping,—he to go back to his own land, and she to hide herself within the holy house at Almesbury, where for many weeks she lives unknown among the unsuspecting nuns. Fresh from his war with Lancelot, the King repairs to Almesbury, and to the prostrate Guinevere, grovelling with her face against the floor, he sets forth all her sin, and all its miserable consequences to 'the fair Order of the Table Round':—

> 'Till the loathsome opposite
> Of all my heart had destined did obtain,
> And all through thee!'

But lest her great remorse should kill her, his pity adds:—

> 'Yet think not that I come to urge thy crimes,
> I did not come to curse thee, Guinevere,
> I, whose vast pity almost makes me die
> To see thee, laying there thy golden head,
> My pride in happier summers, at my feet.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> All is past, the sin is sinn'd, and I,
> Lo! I forgive thee as Eternal God
> Forgives . . . .

'I love thee still.
Let no man dream but that I love thee still,
Perchance, and so thou purify thy soul,
And so thou lean on our fair father Christ,
Hereafter in that world where all are pure
We two may meet before high God, and thou
Wilt spring to me, and claim me thine, and know
I am thine husband—not a smaller soul,
Nor Lancelot, nor another.
. . . . . .
'And while she grovell'd at his feet,
She felt the King's breath wander o'er her neck,
And in the darkness o'er her fallen head,
Perceived the waving of his hands that blest.'

Too late the unhappy Queen knows herself and him; nothing now remains for her but to find comfort in that hope for the future which he has left her :—

'That in mine own heart I can live down sin
And be his mate hereafter in the heavens
Before high God.'
'Is there none,' she cries
'Will tell the King I love him tho' so late?
Now—ere he goes to the great battle? none:
Myself must tell him in that purer life,
But now it were too daring. Ah! my God,
What might I not have made of thy fair world,
Had I but loved thy highest creature here?
It was my duty to have loved the highest;
It surely was my profit had I known:
It would have been my pleasure had I seen.
We needs must love the highest when we see it,
Not Lancelot, nor another.'

And so she withdraws into the convent seclusion to wait and pray, to become saintly in her helpfulness as the revered Abbess of the Convent, and finally to pass

'To where beyond these voices there is peace.'

The last poem of the series, *The Passing of Arthur*, tells how the great King fought his 'last dim, weird battle in the West,' and how in slaying the subtle, foxy-faced traitor Modred, he himself received a mortal wound. The bold Sir Bedivere carries him to a chapel near the field, and listens to his moan :—

> 'The sequel of to-day unsolders all
> The goodliest fellowship of famous knights
> Whereof this world holds record. Such a sleep
> They sleep—the men I loved. I think that we
> Shall never more, at any future time,
> Delight our souls with talk of knightly deeds,
> Walking about the gardens and the halls
> Of Camelot, as in the days that were.'

He reminds Sir Bedivere how in the dim past a mystic hand from out the bosom of the lake had given him the sword Excalibur, and now commands the knight to fling it far into the middle of the mere. Sir Bedivere promises compliance, but, dazzled by its preciousness and beauty,

> 'For all the haft twinkled with diamond sparks,
> Myriads of topaz-lights and jacinth-work
> Of subtlest jewellery,'

twice disobeys, until the King sternly orders him hence, and with a true note of human passion, only too seldom seen in Arthur, exclaims—

> 'If thou spare to fling Excalibur,
> I will arise and slay thee with my hands.
> Then quickly rose Sir Bedivere, and ran,
> And, leaping down the ridges lightly, plunged

Among the bulrush beds, and clutch'd the sword,
And strongly wheel'd and threw it. The great brand
Made lightnings in the splendour of the moon,
And flashing round and round, and whirl'd in an arch,
Shot like a streamer of the northern morn,
Seen where the moving isles of winter shock
By night, with noises of the northern sea.
So flash'd and fell the brand Excalibur:
But ere he dipt the surface, rose an arm
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
And caught him by the hilt, and brandish'd him
Three times, and drew him under in the mere.'

With pain and difficulty Arthur and Sir Bedivere reach 'the level lake,' shining in 'the long glories of the winter moon,' and here they find a barge, come they know not whence, crowded with stately forms, and in the midst three dark Queens with crowns of gold. The Queens

'Put forth their hands, and took the King, and wept;
But she, that rose the tallest of them all
And fairest, laid his head upon her lap,
And loosed the shatter'd casque and chafed his hands,
And call'd him by his name, complaining loud,
And dropping bitter tears against a brow
Striped with dark blood:'

Whereupon the mystic barge with its strange company passed forth to the great deep from which it is said that Arthur had at first come; and Sir Bedivere, watching, thought he heard the echo of a great cry—heard

'Sounds, as if some fair city were one voice
Around a king returning from his wars;'

and straining his eyes he

> 'Thought he saw the speck that bare the king,
> . . . . . Vanish into light.
> And the new sun rose bringing the new year.'

The victory of sense over the soul is, after all, only partial. A beautiful ideal has been obscured behind the gross vapours of earthly passion and low aims. But the pure ideals of the soul, like the soul itself, cannot die. They will live again in new men and in new forms; and the old conflict will be refought under higher and more favourable conditions. Arthur's last slow words spoken from the barge to Bedivere ere he went are full of solemn import:

> 'The old order changeth, yielding place to new,
> And God fulfils himself in many ways,
> Lest one good custom should corrupt the world.
> . . . . . .
> I have lived my life, and that which I have done
> May He within himself make pure! but thou,
> If thou shouldst never see my face again
> Pray for my soul. More things are wrought by prayer
> Than this world dreams of. Wherefore let thy voice
> Rise like a fountain for me night and day.
> For what are men better than sheep or goats
> That nourish a blind life within the brain,
> If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer
> Both for themselves and those who call them friend?
> For so the whole round earth is every way
> Bound by gold chains about the feet of God.'

Whether we allow to the *Idylls* the dignity and unity of the epic or not, it must be admitted that they have treated a great subject with wonderful beauty and suggestiveness. Nowhere is Tennyson's noble purity and elevation, both of thought and diction,

more apparent. It may be objected that Arthur himself does not impress us as he ought; that he is too cold, and passionless, and remote from human nature's ordinary moods, to touch the reader to the quick; that even in the great scene at Almesbury, we feel that it is the calmness and reticence of a god that speak, rather than the passion-tost heart of a man. All this may be conceded, and yet it will remain true, that this rich cycle of Arthurian poems is one of the noblest and most precious contributions to Victorian literature.

In 1864 appeared the volume containing *Enoch Arden*, accompanied by *Aylmer's Field* and *Sea Dreams*. All three come below the level of Tennyson's highest work, and all are characterised by an excess of decorative treatment. The richly jewelled phrasing and prodigality of ornament seem unnatural in a tale of simple fisher life such as *Enoch Arden*, or in a painful and sordid story of the blight that falls upon two lovers from the greed of purse-proud parents, such as *Aylmer's Field*. Even the gorgeous and exquisite description of the tropic island upon which Enoch is cast seems out of place, although no one would like to miss it.

But the volume that contained these poems held several welcome surprises. Here, for example, was *Tithonus*, a flawless piece of work, excelled in craftmanship by nothing else that Tennyson has done. Originally given to his friend Thackeray for the *Cornhill Magazine* in 1860, it tells, with a perfect grace of

classical simplicity, the story of him who was loved by Aurora, and was cursed by the gift of immortality, unaccompanied by that of youthful vigour. *Ulysses*, *Lucretius*, and *Demeter*, produced at widely separated intervals, also take classical subjects, and illustrate the poet's most perfect work. A still greater surprise, however, was found in *The Grandmother*—a favourite with the poet himself—and *The Northern Farmer: Old Style*, the first and the best of his dialect poems. Both illustrate Tennyson's versatility, and reveal other qualities for which hitherto he had not received credit. The grim humour, the vivid realism, the dramatic force and intensity, the power to conceive and reproduce characters entirely outside the world of his own emotions, showed a faculty which had not been expected of him. It was delightful to think that after more than thirty years of authorship, there might still be other surprises in store for us from his pen. The happy vein he had thus fallen upon he continued to work with considerable success. *The Northern Farmer: New Style*, is not much inferior to its earlier namesake. *The Northern Cobbler*, *The Village Wife*, and *The Spinster's Sweet-Arts*, all use the Lincolnshire dialect, and happily illustrate the qualities that mark these dialect poems. In the same vivid monologue form in which Tennyson has thus expressed his most dramatic conceptions, we have *Rispah*, contained in the wonderful volume of 1880, entitled, *Ballads and Other Poems*. It is a short piece; but nowhere else has Tennyson risen to such a height of sustained

passion as in this thrilling glimpse of a mother's tortured heart and maddened brain.

From the success of these monologues, much was expected when, in 1875, the poet published his first drama, *Queen Mary*. It was followed by various other plays, several of which had the honour of public representation, and all of which contained a great deal of fine work, although they left the impression that to his other noble gifts the poet had not added those of the successful dramatist. *Harold* appeared in 1876, *The Cup* and *The Falcon* in 1881, *The Promise of May* in 1882, *Becket* in 1884, and *The Foresters; or Robin Hood and Maid Marian* in 1892, the year of his death. Of all his works, the plays will probably have least permanent interest and value.

In 1886, two volumes, *Locksley Hall, Sixty Years After and other Poems*, and *Tiresias and other Poems*, came from Tennyson's pen. The latter, along with much good work besides, contained *The Ancient Sage*, a poem which may be said to sum up towards the close of life all the best of Tennyson's teaching concerning this world and the next. It expresses the same wholesome optimism as of old, and shows that the poet's position has not greatly altered save to the advantage of faith, since *The Two Voices* was written more than forty years before. 'Wherefore,' says the Ancient Sage to his doubting companion,

> 'Cleave ever to the sunnier side of doubt,
> And cling to Faith beyond the forms of Faith!

She reels not in the storm of warring words,
She brightens at the clash of "Yes" and "No,"
She sees the Best that glimmers thro' the Worst,
She feels the sun is hid but for a night,
She spies the summer thro' the winter bud,
She tastes the fruit before the blossom falls,
She hears the lark within the songless egg,
She finds the fountain where they wail'd "Mirage!"

To the objection that

'Man has overlived his day,
And, darkening in the light,
Scarce feels the senses break away
To mix with ancient Night.'

the answer is:

'The shell must break before the bird can fly.'

What then?

'Let be thy wail and help thy fellow-men,
And make thy gold thy vassal, not thy king,
And fling free alms into the beggar's bowl,
And send the day into the darken'd heart,
. . . . . .
And lay thine uphill shoulder to the wheel,
And climb the Mount of Blessing, whence, if thou
Look higher, then—perchance—thou mayest, beyond
A hundred ever-rising mountain lines,
And past the range of Night and Shadow—see
The high-heaven dawn of more than mortal day
Strike on the Mount of Vision.'

Demeter and other Poems was given to the world in 1889 when the poet was eighty years of age. It is said that 20,000 copies were sold within a week. It contained the strangely beautiful poem of his old age, *Merlin and the Gleam*. It is easy to read into this

exquisite piece, as rich in its imaginative as in its emotional power, the noblest part of the poet's own personal history. He is the Merlin whose life from the beginning to the close, and whose exercise of high gift as a poet in all stages of his career, have been a constant pursuit of the ideal in life. Here, if anywhere, is his dying testament to the age he has charmed and guided so long, and it is addressed especially to the young :—Neglect no practical duty, do it ever manfully, kindly, well ; but let your spiritual aspirations rule your soul ; follow the Gleam !

Tennyson's history in the latter half of his life is little more than the history of his various books, and of an ever-growing reputation. In 1853 he had established himself at Farringford, Freshwater, in the Isle of Wight. After 1869, in order to escape the crowd of summer visitors, he spent only his winters here, his summers being given to his more secluded residence at Aldworth, near Haslemere, in Surrey. In 1883 he was made a peer under the title of Baron Tennyson of Aldworth and Freshwater. These years of calm and honoured decline had almost nothing to disturb them, if we except the death of his favourite brother Charles in 1879, and the still sadder event of the death of his younger son Lionel at sea, in 1885.

Tennyson's own life, that had been so ideally beautiful, had also an ideal close. His health had begun to give way in 1890. But, as we have seen, he continued to do good work for two years longer.

In the last days of September 1892, he was prostrated by an attack of influenza, complicated by gout. In the early morning of October 6th, with all his family around him, and with no other light than that of the full moon shining in upon his bed, all that was mortal of the great poet passed peacefully away.

There is a beautiful completeness about the life of Tennyson. He seems to have done all he meant to do. He never really failed in anything he attempted. There was no apparent decay in his powers. Almost to the last he retained his poetic sensibility unimpaired. The world, too, had been generous to him. He had secured an ample fortune, and the highest honours had fallen to his lot. Besides, he had the knowledge that his was not the approval only, but the love of all English-speaking men and women throughout the world; that he had added largely to the sum of human happiness, by pouring a fresh flood of vivid beauty over the whole of life; and that in doing so he had written no word that had not upon it the seal of a pure intent and a blameless life.

The determination of what Tennyson's place among the poets is to be, must be left for posterity to decide. A review of all his work cannot overlook his versatility, or the fact that he did so many things supremely well. Among his most impressive qualities are an elevation of thought and a purity of tone that sometimes give to his poems an almost sacramental grace and dignity. In the marvellous beauty of form and expression to which he attained, he has scarcely his equal among

English poets. He was pre-eminently the poet of his time. It is difficult to see how anyone else could have been to his age what he was. He reflects all its spirit. The yearnings and the doubts that fill the air he catches up into all beautiful modulations, not seeking rudely, or with sheer weight of authority, to crush them, but linking them on to a faith and hope that are in him servants to Love Supreme. When the history of English thought and belief in the latter half of the nineteenth century comes to be written, no better commentary upon its complex moods and philosophisings will be available than Tennyson's poems afford.

With these words, so eloquent of calm and settled trust, from *Crossing the Bar*, one of his last poems, this sketch may fitly close:

'Twilight and evening bell,
And after that the dark!
And may there be no shadow of farewell,
When I embark;

'For though from out our bourne of Time and Place
The flood may bear us far,
I hope to see my Pilot face to face
When I have crost the bar.'

Robert Browning (1812-1889). No one could be in sharper contrast with the author of *The Idylls* and *In Memoriam* than the poet to whose genius we owe *The Ring and the Book*, and yet, Browning shares with Tennyson the distinction of being the greatest poet of the Victorian era. He was born at Camber-

well, a suburb of London, on the 7th of May 1812. His father, also a Robert Browning, was a bookish man, of considerable force of character, artistic taste, and even of some attainments in verse-making. Browning invariably speaks of him with a warmth and enthusiasm that recall Carlyle's similar deliverances respecting his peasant father. With a certain felicity, therefore, Browning's early training and associations prepared him for his lifework as a poet. At twelve years of age, he had composed poems enough to fill a volume, which the publishers to whom it was offered, very naturally declined. Mr Gosse, on the authority of Mr Browning, mentions that the earliest recognition of his genius came from the Misses Flower, the younger of whom, under the name of Sarah Flower Adams, is still widely appreciated for such beautiful devotional pieces as *Nearer my God to Thee*, and *He sendeth Sun, He sendeth Shower*. Byron was the object of Browning's youthful idolatry, as he was also of Tennyson's. Naturally, therefore, the note of imitation is as marked in these early effusions as is the absence of all indication of the original and peculiar forms in which Browning was afterwards to express himself. An event now happened that greatly extended his range by opening up to the eager boy of fourteen a whole fresh world of enchantment. This was the gift made to him by his mother of all the works of Shelley, and three volumes from the pen of Mr John Keats.

Amidst all this reading and writing of poetry, which

was noticeably at this time, as it was ever afterwards, the chief life-business of the poet, the work of ordinary education had to be proceeded with. Till 1826 he was at school at Dulwich. Then came some private tutoring, followed in his eighteenth year by a brief course at London University. On his father speaking to him about a profession, he begged that he might be allowed to give himself entirely to poetry. To this his father consented, and somehow—it could scarcely have been from the small means afforded by his father's income—he was enabled to live for poetry, and even to make a considerable stay abroad. Perhaps there were kind friends like Aunt Silverthorne who were not unwilling to make pecuniary sacrifices in order to assist the development of so promising a career. In any case, there can have been few poets more fortunate in being left thus free to follow unwarped the promptings of their own genius.

The first fruits of this genius were *Pauline*, published in 1833, when the poet was twenty-one, and *Paracelsus*, which appeared two years later. The former he would gladly have withdrawn from circulation. Speaking of it afterwards, he says that good draughtsmanship and right handling were far beyond the artist at this time. *Paracelsus* was a great advance on *Pauline*, and gave magnificent promise of the poet's future. It is a long dramatic poem of more than 4000 lines, in which, although there are four characters, the essential feature is that of soliloquy or monologue. The ruggedness, obscurity, and want of

melody that have come to be recognised as characteristic of Browning's verse are all found here, as well as his masculine and vivid intelligence. These poems, however, were scarcely noticed by the public, although the cultivated few did not fail to mark their promise. At the request of Mr Macready the tragedian, Browning wrote *Strafford*, which was produced at Covent Garden Theatre in 1837, with Mr Macready in the title character. It appears to have met with fair success, but was withdrawn after five nights in consequence of trouble connected with the management. His next literary venture was *Sordello* (1840), giving the whole life-history of a human soul, and for this the poet reverted to the form of monologue. It was the longest, and, it may be added, the most obscure poem he had yet written. It still shares along with certain of his latest writings that unenviable distinction. Hitherto Browning had derived no pecuniary advantage from these various publications; but when a series of his writings began to appear under the happy title of *Bells and Pomegranates*, the popular attention was at last partially won. This work appeared in cheap parts, and thus were produced in 1841 his strange, but beautiful play, *Pippa Passes*, which describes how Pippa, a sweet and pretty mill-girl, thinking herself nobody, takes her New Year's holiday, and in a solitary walk, enlivened by her songs, all unconsciously to herself, changes the whole destiny of four different sets of lives, as well as her own. It contains passages of great power and

lyrical sweetness, and seems to find its moral in the refrain of Pippa's song:

> 'God's in His heaven—
> All's right with the world.'

Another play, *King Victor and King Charles*, appeared in the same number, accompanied by a series of smaller pieces, under the title *Dramatic Lyrics*, including such well-known poems as *Evelyn Hope*, *Saul*, *The Lost Leader*, *How they Brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix*, and the *Soliloquy in a Spanish Cloister*. In the years following until 1846, successive numbers of *Bells and Pomegranates* appeared, containing other five plays, *The Return of the Druses* (1843), *A Blot on the 'Scutcheon* (1843), *Colombe's Birthday* (1844), *A Soul's Tragedy* (1846), and *Luria* (1846). The *Dramatic Romances*, a second series of shorter pieces, was produced in 1845, and embraced such fine work as *My Last Duchess*, *Porphyria's Lover*, *In a Gondola*, *The Last Ride Together*, and *A Grammarian's Funeral*. *A Blot on the 'Scutcheon* was commissioned by Mr Macready, and produced at Drury Lane Theatre in 1843. It was given to crowded houses, but fortune once more played the poet false, for again a collapse in the management brought its stage career to a close. *Colombe's Birthday*, the only other play of his that has been performed in public, was produced by Miss Helen Faucit in 1852.

More important to the poet than any of these events

was his marriage in 1846 to Miss Elizabeth Barrett, the poetess, who had shortly before paid a high compliment to his *Bells and Pomegranates* in *Lady Geraldine's Courtship*. Thereafter till 1861, when Mrs Browning's death put an end to this ideally perfect and singularly happy union, they lived abroad, chiefly at Florence, making only occasional visits to this country. The literary activity of both continued, and appeared to receive a new stimulus from their domestic happiness.

In 1850, Browning gave to the world his fine *Christmas Eve* and *Easter Day*, from which we learn, though not very clearly, what is Browning's attitude to the Christian faith. These were followed in 1855 by *Men and Women*, his most popular work, a series of fifty poems, including such characteristic pieces as *Karshish*, *Fra Lippo Lippi*, *Andrea del Sarto*, and *The Bishop orders his Tomb at Saint Praxed's Church*. In the last of these and in the *Soliloquy in a Spanish Cloister*, as well as elsewhere in these poems, he shows what meanness of petty vanity, what black passions of jealousy and hatred may crouch beneath the cowl of monk and rochet of bishop. The dying bishop of St Praxed's gives directions to his nephews that they shall build for him a tomb all of jasper, with a priceless lump of lapis lazuli, 'big as a Jew's head cut off at the nape, resting upon his knees,' and with an epitaph:

'Choice Latin, picked phrase, Tully's every word;'

and all that his ancient rival, dead Gandolf, may see and burst with envy.

Karshish is in the form of an epistle addressed by an Arab physician of that name, travelling in Judea in the days when the Roman legions under Titus were mustering for their final swoop upon Jerusalem, to his friend and master, Abib. It had evidently been the purpose of Karshish to describe everything of importance that he had seen upon his way, but he is diverted from this purpose by the overpowering interest he takes in one most remarkable case that had come under his notice at Bethany. According to his professional judgment, this was a case of epilepsy, accompanied by a three days' trance, and followed by a peculiar form of mania. The patient, a man named Lazarus, he has seen and conversed with. The simplicity, the aloofness that almost seems like stolid indifference, the strange serenity, and the moral elevation of this man's character, powerfully impress him. He has no doubt that he has diagnosed the case correctly, yet when Lazarus maintains that he has actually been dead and been restored to life by a great Nazarene of his tribe, whom, moreover, he declares to be a god, his mind is left in a state of pathetic uncertainty, which he cannot help revealing to his correspondent. Above all things would Karshish have liked to have met the learned Nazarene, whose death on a charge of wizardry, as reported to him, he deeply mourns. The characteristics of Lazarus, his sound physical health, the other-worldliness even of his outward aspect, the altered focus of his whole mental being, causing all ordinary human events and experi-

ences to dwindle into insignificance, as might well be in one whose eyes have gazed upon God's secret in the unseen; on the one hand, his almost cruel indifference to the ordinary pain, sorrow, and death of the world, and, on the other, the fierce flame of his indignation not at evil deeds only, but also at the slightest evil word or gesture; his resignation to the will of God that has sent him to live and labour here awhile; and his general attitude of love and tenderness, not only towards human beings, but even to the lower animals and the universe of dead things, he dwells upon at length. The subject strangely fascinates, yet troubles Karshish. He apologises for dwelling so long upon it, and for a moment tears himself away to speak of trivial matters such as the blue-flowering borage, very nitrous, he had noticed on the margin of a pool, yet ends his letter with the passionate heart-questioning outburst of these final words:—

> 'The very God! think, Abib; dost thou think?
> So, the All-Great were the All-Loving too—
> So, through the thunder comes a human voice,
> Saying, "O heart I made, a heart beats here!
> Face, my hands fashioned, see it in myself!
> Thou hast no power nor mayst conceive of mine,
> But love I gave thee, with myself to love,
> And thou must love me who have died for thee!"
> The madman saith He said so: it is strange.'

Fra Lippo Lippi and *Andrea del Sarto* are companion soul portraits of two great mediæval painters, and are both written in the monologue form in which Browning did so much of his best work. There is

something deeply interesting in the views of character which these etchings suggest, yet there is reason to suppose that in life the men were actually as the poet has described them here. Fortunately the portrait of Fra Lippo Lippi, painted by himself, is to be seen in the National Gallery in London, and it has been noticed how curiously it corroborates this mental portrait furnished by Browning. It is that of a man in whom under the tonsure of the monk lurk unsubdued all tendencies of the world and of the flesh. Placed an orphan at eight years of age in the cloister, the religious life found nothing in him beyond the common superstitions of his age, except a delight in all forms of physical beauty and a divine gift of painting, which his brother monks, scandalised though they were by the fooleries and offences of his coarsely sensuous nature, were fain to regard as covering a multitude of sins. Even neighboured with such grossness, his was the heaven-born, incommunicable touch of a great and immortal genius.

As a psychological study *Andrea del Sarto* is perhaps even more subtle and interesting. He is the faultless painter, the wonder of his age in all matters of technique. He too has his limitations, but they are of the home rather than of the cloister. The visions of his youth have not fulfilled themselves. He himself and his work, he feels, have fallen into the greyness and low tone of an autumn twilight. He is heart-weary with labours that do not satisfy, notwithstanding, perhaps because of their technical perfection, and because, as

he thinks, either the soul that should have entered into them was never there, or it has been frozen by lack of encouragement from the one person whose praise or blame could have influenced him. With all her beauty, his wife is cold, selfish, and irresponsive. His moan is

> 'You don't understand
> Nor care to understand about my art.'

To her, indeed, its only significance is its power to supply her wants, and no matter how work is scamped, if only money can be got to purchase her ruffs, and pay the gaming debts of the cousin whose whistle calling her can be heard by del Sarto while his monologue is proceeding.

The great painter knows his powers :—

> 'I do what many dream of all their lives,
> —Dream? strive to do, and agonize to do,
> And fail in doing. I could count twenty such
> On twice your fingers, and not leave this town.'

Yet has he to confess :—

> 'There burns a truer light of God in them,
> In their vexed beating stuffed and stopped-up brain,
> Heart, or whate'er else, than goes on to prompt
> This low-pulsed forthright craftsman's hand of mine.
> Their works drop groundward, but themselves, I know,
> Reach many a time a heaven that's shut to me,
> Enter and take their place there sure enough,
> Though they come back and cannot tell the world
> My works are nearer heaven, but I sit here.'

It might have been so different.

'Yonder's a work now, of that famous youth
The Urbinate who died five years ago.
('Tis copied, George Vasari sent it me.)
Well, I can fancy how he did it all,
Pouring his soul, with kings and popes to see,
Reaching, that heaven might so replenish him,
Above and through his art—for it gives way;
That arm is wrongly put—and there again—
A fault to pardon in the drawing's lines,
Its body, so to speak: its soul is right,
He means right—that, a child may understand.
Still, what an arm! and I could alter it:
But all the play, the insight and the stretch—
Out of me, out of me! And wherefore out?
Had you enjoined them on me, given me soul,
We might have risen to Rafael, I and you!
Nay, Love, you did give all I asked, I think—
More than I merit, yes, by many times.
But had you—oh, with the same perfect brow,
And perfect eyes, and more than perfect mouth,
And the low voice my soul hears, as a bird
The fowler's pipe, and follows to the snare—
Had you, with these the same, but brought a mind
Some women do so. Had the mouth there urged
"God and the glory! never care for gain.
The present by the future, what is that?
Live for fame, side by side with Agnolo!
Rafael is waiting: up to God, all three!"
I might have done it for you. So it seems:
Perhaps not. All is as God over-rules.
Besides, incentives come from the soul's self;
The rest avail not.'

The self-revelations of the poor, baffled, disappointed painter, close in catching a faint half hope from the future in a world to come:—

'What would one have?
In heaven, perhaps, new chances, one more chance—
Four great walls in the New Jerusalem,

Meted on each side by the angel's reed,
For Leonard, Rafael, Agnolo and me
To cover—the three first without a wife,
While I have mine! So—still they overcome
Because there's still Lucrezia,—as I choose.

Again the cousin's whistle! Go, my Love.'

On the death of his wife in 1861, Browning left Florence never to return. It was a terrible wrench, but his work did not suffer. He returned to London, and in 1864 produced *Dramatis Personæ*, which, next to *Men and Women*, has been the most popular of his works. It contained, with other pieces, *Abt Vogler*, *Rabbi ben Ezra*, *A Death in the Desert*, and *Prospice*. In these poems he again and again insists that God has a plan for every life, and that that plan requires eternity for its completion. Thus, in the opening stanza of *Rabbi ben Ezra*, he says:

'Grow old along with me!
The best is yet to be,
The last of life, for which the first was made:
Our times are in His hand
Who saith, "A whole I planned,
Youth shows but half; trust God: see all, nor be afraid!"'

And he adds:

'Then, welcome each rebuff
That turns earth's smoothness rough,
Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand but go!
Be our joys three-parts pain!
Strive, and hold cheap the strain;
Learn, nor account the pang; dare, never grudge the throe!'

The Ring and the Book, published in 1868-69, is generally considered Browning's masterpiece. This

vast poem of 21,000 lines has for its subject a famous criminal trial held at Rome in 1698, in which a certain Count Guido Franceschini of Arezzo and his four confederates are charged with the murder of his wife Pompilia and her putative parents, Pietro and Violante Comparini.

The poem opens with an account of how the subject first presented itself to the poet's mind. Crossing the Square of San Lorenzo, in Florence, one blazing market-day in June, he found exposed for sale, with many other odds and ends, an old vellum-bound volume, part print, part manuscript, containing a report of this once famous two-century-old case. For a lira (eightpence of our money) he becomes its possessor, and cons it so eagerly, that ere he has reached his home in Casa Guidi, he has mastered its contents. Eight times in all he reads it, till, saturated with the gruesome tragedy, he fashions it into the *Ring and the Book*. But why, it may be asked, this name? The somewhat fanciful explanation is given, that in that old volume he had found the crude but precious ore of truth, to which his poet's fancy had added the alloy of so much necessary falsehood, that it might be rounded as by hammer and by file into a ring wherewith to link our England to Italy. Here and there the personal note, always interesting in Browning, comes in. Examples of this are to be seen in his touching address to his English readers, beginning:

'Such, British Public, ye who like me not,
(God love you!)—whom I yet have laboured for'—

and in his wonderfully beautiful apostrophe to his dead wife as *Lyric Love*:—

'O Lyric Love, half angel and half bird
And all a wonder and a wild desire,—
Boldest of hearts that ever braved the sun,
Took sanctuary within the holier blue,
And sang a kindred soul out to his face,—
Yet human at the red-ripe of the heart—
When the first summons from the darkling earth
Reached thee amid thy chambers, blanched their blue,
And bared them of the glory—to drop down,
To toil for man, to suffer or to die,—
This is the same voice: Can thy soul know change?
Hail then, and hearken from the realms of help!
Never may I commence my song, my due
To God who best taught song by gift of thee,
Except with bent head and beseeching hand—
That still, despite the distance and the dark,
What was, again may be; some interchange
Of grace, some splendour once thy very thought,
Some benediction anciently thy smile.'

Only a poet of a genius more than equal to his courage would have dared to undertake a work on so colossal a scale, and on so apparently eccentric a plan. Including Browning's own summary of the facts, the circumstances of the murder are given with great detail ten different times, in order to show the various points of view from which they may be regarded, and also to furnish life portraits of the principal persons concerned. The poet tells how Count Guido, almost bankrupt both of means and hope of preferment, under the advice of his brother the Cardinal, marries for her dowry the beautiful Pompilia, then a girl of thirteen years of age, and the reputed daughter of

Pietro and Violante Comparini, but in reality the base-born child of a degraded wanton of the Roman streets. Disappointment as to the dowry expected causes Guido to treat Pompilia with a cruelty that is not satisfied with destroying the happiness of her present life, but even seeks the ruin of her soul. Encouraged by her husband, efforts are put forth to draw her into foulest sin; and when these are of no avail, Count Guido does not hesitate to forge letters apparently passing between his wife and Canon Caponsacchi. After four years of this moral torture, Pompilia begs Caponsacchi to take her to Rome that her child may not be born under the ill-omened roof of her husband. The mind of the young priest has been strangely purified and elevated by all he has learned and seen of this noble, but persecuted wife, and cannot refuse her request. They are almost at the gates of Rome, when Guido overtakes, and hands them over to the civil authority. The judges sit upon their case, listen to the pleadings of Caponsacchi, and perplexed, though apparently convinced of their innocence, pass the mild sentence that Pompilia shall take up her abode in the Convent of the Convertites, and that Caponsacchi shall go into a three years' retirement at Civita. After a time Pompilia's health requires her removal to the house of the Comparini, where shortly afterwards her child is born. Hearing of that event, and believing that whatever happens to the mother now, her dowry will pass into his hands for his son, Guido suddenly appears with four confederates before

Pietro's villa and murders all its inmates. Terrified lest her husband should seek to get possession of the child, Pompilia had a few days before placed him in safe keeping. The murderers having been captured, are immediately brought up for trial, and all are condemned.

Such are the bare outlines of the story, which are viewed by one half Rome on the whole favourably to the murderers; by the other half, unfavourably; while the opinion of the critical cultured minority is that there is truth on both sides, and that the blame, if any, is to be equally distributed. After these skirmishes of more or less indifferent outsiders, the interest deepens when Count Guido, fresh from the torture, under which he has confessed his crime, pleads for his life, and with all the cunning of his subtle nature seeks to distort the evidence, to evoke pity for his own alleged sufferings and humiliations, and to blast the character of his victims. One shudders at the diabolical ingenuity and varied intellectual gifts he displays in raising all sorts of false issues, in playing upon the weaknesses of his judges, and in seeking to involve them in a maze of plausible sophistries. All is of no avail, but the whole impression left upon the mind is one of immense power turned to the worst uses.

He is succeeded by Guiseppe Caponsacchi, and it is only when we learn from his lips the nature of that slow moral torture of four years through which the gentle Pompilia has passed, that Guido's astounding

cruelty, sordid meanness, and unnatural hate, stand forth in all their horrid proportions. As for Caponsacchi himself, he rises before us with a vividness scarcely inferior even to the lurid personality of Count Guido. In a torrent of eloquent words he repeats the tale he had told to the same judges a few months before. His indignation scorches them with its passion, as he reminds them how their supineness and incredulity had brought about the death of Pompilia. He rises to a rare elevation as, casting all fear of misconstruction to the winds, he avows with passionate eloquence the warmth of his interest in Pompilia's Madonna-like purity and nobility of character, one moment's contact with which had been sufficient to banish all the frivolity and dissipation of his youth, and to make him true priest and servant of holiness for ever.

Pompilia herself speaks next in a paper dictated during the four days she lay a-dying. The angel-like sweetness of the seventeen years' old wife and mother breathes in every word. Forgotten is much of the old pain and sorrow—'Sheer dreaming and impossibility.' She dies content. Here, in her old home and with old friends around her, for one whole blissful fortnight, the joys of happy motherhood have been hers; and now her child, seeing that he cannot fall into the hands of an evil father, she can calmly leave in the hands of God. Above all, she rejoices that time has been given her to clear from mists of calumny that pure and knightly soul that reached out to her

in her great need a human hand of help, and in the generosity of his sacred impulse considered only her urgency, and never for a moment any possible loss of reputation for himself.

> 'Yes, my last breath shall wholly spend itself
> In one attempt more to disperse the stain,
> The mist from other breath fond mouths have made,
> About a lustrous and pellucid soul:
> So that, when I am gone but sorrow stays,
> And people need assurance in their doubt
> If God yet have a servant, man a friend,
> The weak a saviour, and the vile a foe,—
> Let him be present, by the name invoked,
> Guiseppe-Maria Caponsacchi!'

As she nears her end, the spiritual passion in her gathers force, and she breaks out into the apostrophe—

> 'O Lover of my life, O soldier-saint,
> No work begun shall ever pause for death!
> Love will be helpful to me more and more
> I' the coming course, the new path I must tread—
> My weak hand in thy strong hand, strong for that!
> Tell him that if I seem without him now,
> That's the world's insight! Oh! he understands!
> He is at Civita—do I once doubt
> The world again is holding us apart?
> He had been here, displayed in my behalf
> The broad brow that reverberates the truth,
> And flashed the word God gave him, back to man!
> I know where the free soul is flown! My fate
> Will have been hard for even him to bear:
> Let it confirm him in the trust of God,
> Showing how holily he dared the deed!
> And, for the rest,—say, from the deed, no touch
> Of harm came, but all good, all happiness,
> Not one faint fleck of failure!'

Her dying hope is that in the heaven to which she

is going she may once more meet this great soul, and that there they may

> 'Be as the angels rather, who, apart,
> Know themselves into one, are found at length
> Married, but marry never, no, nor give
> In marriage; they are man and wife at once
> When the true time is: here we have to wait
> Not so long neither! Could we by a wish
> Have what we will and get the future now,
> Would we wish aught done undone in the past?
> So, let him wait God's instant, men call years;
> Meantime hold hard by truth and his great soul,
> Do out the duty! Through such souls alone
> God stooping shows sufficient of His light
> For us i' the dark to rise by. And I rise.'

This poem would have lost little by the omission of the speeches of the advocates on either side. They have no real interest in the case except what is professional, as affording an opportunity for the display of intellectual dexterity, wit, and scholarship, often far-fetched and tiresome enough.

It is different with Pope Innocent the Twelfth, to whom, after the prisoners have been declared guilty, the case has been appealed on the ground that Count Guido is a lay-ecclesiastic, and therefore entitled to come under the shield of the Church. The picture which Browning has drawn of the good old Pope, 'simple, sagacious, mild, yet resolute,' is entitled to rank even with such masterpieces as Guido, Caponsacchi, and Pompilia. In the plain chamber, sparsely furnished, where he does his work, we see him spending the dim hours of a sombre February day over the long pleadings of the case, till, to his clear vision and

mellow wisdom, the diabolic craft, the greed, and the portentous wickedness of Count Guido stand unmistakably revealed in colours that are all the more hateful because he is a three-parts consecrate, and has had every advantage of high birth, good breeding, a sound frame, and a solid intellect to give him his life-chance in the world. Quite as clearly does the venerable pontiff see how the star of Pompilia's purity takes a heavenlier lustre from the inky blackness of her origin as the child of a degraded wanton. What wonder had she too besmirched her soul? But instead of that, the Pope pronounces her 'first of the first, perfect in whiteness'; claims her as his rose gathered for the breast of God, the one blossom, 'born 'mid the briers of his enclosure, that makes him proud at eve.' Nor is his understanding of the true nobility and chivalrous self-sacrifice of Caponsacchi less instant and entire. Him he fondly calls his 'warrior priest,' flecked, it may be, with impulsive rashness and many irregularities of a worldly and too freakish youth, but ever pure in life and sound of soul.

The Pope dismisses the appeal, and orders the execution of all the five criminals to take place on the following day. Then does Count Guido tear the mask from himself, and pour forth the pent-up rage, malignity, and blasphemy of his soul into the ears of the shuddering priests, who have been sent to warn the prisoner of his doom, and administer ghostly consolation. The foul stream is only interrupted when the unhappy wretch hears without the feet of the dread

brotherhood of death come to bear him to his execution, and shrieks out his agonised entreaty for help—

> 'Abate,—Cardinal,—Christ,—Maria,—God, . . .
> Pompilia, will you let them murder me?'

Surely a fine touch of genius that makes us see how, after all, his final conception of pitifulness and mercy is found, not even in God, but in the child-wife he has so foully murdered and traduced.

Browning wrote much after *The Ring and the Book*, but most of these later writings are too difficult for young and ordinary readers. A list of them is here given in the order in which they appeared :—

1871. 'Balaustion's Adventure.'
„ 'Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau, Saviour of Society (Napoleon III).
1872. 'Fifine at the Fair.'
1873. 'Red Cotton Nightcap Country.'
1875. 'Aristophanes' Apology.'
„ 'The Inn Album.'
1876. 'Pacchiarotto, and How he Worked in Distemper.'
1877. 'Agamemnon.'
1878. 'La Saisiaz.'
„ 'The Two Poets of Croisic.'
1879. 'Dramatic Idylls.'
1880. „ „ 2nd series.
1883. 'Jocoseria.'
1884. 'Ferishtah's Fancies.'
1887. 'Parleyings with certain People of Importance in their day.'
1889. 'Asolando.'

Several of these show Browning's interest in Greek art, the best of them being *Balaustion's Adventure*, a translation of the *Alcestis* of Euripides. *La Saisiaz* contains the poet's mature thoughts on God, the soul, death, and a future life. Some of the Dramatic Idylls, such as *Halbert and Hob*, are scarcely inferior to his best work in *Men and Women*, and *Dramatis Personæ*. In *Asolando*, published on the day of his death, we find a lyrical sweetness and melody that belong to his best time; and in these closing stanzas of the Epilogue, Browning's last words to the world, we find not only the expression of much of his wise and hopeful philosophy of life, but also a description of the poet himself:—

'One who never turned his back but marched breast forward,
Never doubted clouds would break,
Never dreamed, though right were worsted, wrong would triumph,
Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,
Sleep to wake.

'No, at noonday in the bustle of man's work-time
Greet the unseen with a cheer!
Bid him forward, breast and back, as either should be,
Strive and thrive! cry "Speed,—fight on, fare ever
There as here!"'

No writer has suffered more than Browning from excessive praise and indiscriminate blame. Those who admire him see in him a true poet of great strength and originality, with a passionate intensity, a keenness of insight, and a wild rollicking humour, which have seldom been equalled. He has faults of obscurity, harshness, over-elaboration, and want of self-control,

that cannot be overlooked. He is not, and never can be, a poet of the people. The mental strain which such poetry puts upon the reader is severe. Strength, both emotional and intellectual, is required for the understanding and appreciation of soul-portraits, etched with such subtlety, vigour, and passionate intensity. Browning is a profound analyst of human nature. But it is human nature in startling and abnormal forms, remote from the experiences of ordinary men and women, that most interests him. Such qualities of soul he will trace through all the windings of their course, show what influences, past and present, have given them a trend in this direction or in that, and exhibit the causes of a conflict, the tragic issues of which can neither be foreseen nor averted. They are dark chambers of the soul which he thus exposes to our view. Too often, therefore, notwithstanding the gleams of a grim humour playing over his pages, they form but ghastly reading. They will scarcely furnish satisfaction to those who want to see only the brighter side of human character and life. Sanguine though Browning is, his works on the whole are a rebuke to that comfortable, easy-going optimism which is the average mood of the average man. Browning, however, is no prophet of despair. His lurid delineations would seem to make poor human nature almost as bad as it can be; but never in the darkest conflicts of the soul which he depicts is it a foregone conclusion that it will take the downward course. There is at least the possibility that its final motion will be upward.

And even when at last the evil has been chosen, there is present the pitying concession that it might, and would have been different, if only the conspiring circumstances had been different. Even to the end, therefore, Browning's own attitude towards the humanity he has anatomised with such a searching keenness is one of hope. He retains his faith in an over-ruling God, all Wisdom, Power, and Love, working, even through the blind passions of men, towards a higher good. He seems to have cherished what has been called 'the larger hope,' that can anticipate for every human soul, somewhere in the ages, an ultimate deliverance and perfection.

> 'God, by God's ways occult
> May—doth, I will believe—bring back
> All wanderers to a single track.'

But if the psychological nature of his subjects has thus tended to repel the general reader, so also has his manner of treating them. So wanting in lucidity, and so eccentric is that manner, that he almost seems at times to be making sport alike of the reader and of the intensely serious purpose which he has in view. Very rarely has he the charm of simple melody and beauty so characteristic of Tennyson. He is generally harsh both in rhythm and in rhyme. His rugged and abrupt lines are broken and splintered by the force of the contending passions they express, bursting forth now in words of burning invective, and now in bitter mocking gibes

that seem to cut to the very bone. Fine passages of natural description are not altogether absent; but these are as rare as they are beautiful, and most frequently serve as the background to the vehemence of some human passion of hate or jealousy, greed or revenge, that is the main subject of the poem.

It may also be urged against Browning that he carries us into too wide a field, that he fatigues by too great an amplitude of detail, and that he startles, if he does not repel, by indulging every wild vagary and caprice, alike of thought, imagination, and language. Browning's genius was essentially dramatic, although not in the same sense as Shakespeare's. He had failed, as we have seen, to win the reputation and substantial rewards of the successful playwright; but no one will deny to him a wonderful mastery of the dramatic monologue as a vehicle for expressing intensely tragic emotion.

A peculiar interest attaches to the ethical position of a writer of such commanding power as Browning. He sees at the root of all that is best in man, a spirit of quenchless aspiration. According to this view, when a man ceases to yearn and reach forward, the worm of decay is preying upon his soul. Whether he be scholar seeking the gains of knowledge, artist engaged in the pursuit of ideal beauty, or saint in the quest of goodness, his truest life and best achievement are still to come. From platforms of ascent already reached, man thus descries ever loftier heights to which the aspirations and endeavours of his soul

may go forth. And Death? Even that does not stop—scarcely, indeed, does it interrupt—it only continues and facilitates the progress. For such a spirit, therefore, earth can be no perfect, final, or satisfying theatre. It requires for the satisfaction of its yearnings and the development of its powers, a life free from the limitations of the present. Not less does it demand an infinite ideal, which can only be the Infinite Wisdom, Power, and Love of Christian faith. Thus though Browning may not have pinned himself down to any formal creed, upon such great verities of faith as these, his feet are pillared immovably.

'God's in His heaven—
All's right in the world.'

Mr Browning died at Venice on the 12th December 1889, and was buried in Westminster Abbey.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1809-1861), the wife of Robert Browning, is considered by many to have been the greatest of English poetesses, although there are those who prefer to bestow this distinction on Christina Rossetti. Miss Barrett was born in 1809 at Coxhoe Hall, in the county of Durham—although some give 1806 as the year, and London as the place of birth—and was the daughter of Mr Edward Moulton, who assumed the name of Barrett on inheriting a property in Herefordshire through his maternal grandfather. On this property he built a Gothic mansion to which he gave the name of Hope End, and here in the midst of a pleasant and beautiful landscape the

little poetess passed an ideal childhood. Her sympathetic and indulgent father encouraged her youthful efforts, and afforded her every opportunity of gratifying her tastes. She was a precocious child, wrote poetry at eight years of age, and was wont at that time to divide her attentions between Homer in the original, and her doll, her flowers, and her favourite pony, Moses. Hers, however, was a true and natural childhood, with nothing hard or one-sided in its development. At the age of eleven she wrote an epic on *The Battle of Marathon*, of which her proud father had fifty copies printed. It does not appear, however, that either her father or any other member of her own family circle could give her the stimulus of a true intellectual companionship. The only person who at this time seems to have come into this closer contact with her was Mr Boyd, an old, blind, scholar-friend, under whose guidance she became acquainted with the Greek tragedians. Even he, probably, was not possessed of any qualities beyond those of a purely technical scholarship, such as would have enabled him fully to appreciate the genius of the fresh and ardent girl nature so strangely submitted to his guidance.

The idyllic life of Hope End was at length interrupted, and shadows began to fall deeply over a life which hitherto had been all sunshine and charm. When Miss Barrett was fifteen she fell backwards in attempting to saddle her horse, and so injured herself that it became necessary to abstain from all physical

exercise for several years. Painful though these years were, they were not unfruitful, for they undoubtedly gave her the opportunity of acquiring that wide acquaintance with various literatures that is so characteristic of her. Unhappily, misfortunes did not come singly. Her father lost much of his money, then her mother died, and following that the home at Hope End was broken up. The family lived for two years at Sidmouth, and then came to London, settling first in Gloucester Place, and afterwards in Wimpole Street. But London did not suit Miss Barrett's health. She had burst a bloodvessel in the lungs, and a long period of physical weakness ensued. A residence at Torquay was recommended, but here the greatest misfortune of her life befell her. Her favourite brother and two of his companions were drowned while boating in the bay. Utterly prostrate, she was confined to a dark chamber for several years after this event. But in 1844 the sunshine returned, never more during the remaining seventeen years of her life to leave her. This was when, through the introduction of her cousin Mr Kenyon, she became acquainted with Mr Robert Browning. In 1846 she was married to the poet, who, till her death, cherished her with a beautiful devotion, and thus gave her not only an undreamt-of happiness, but a new lease of life. For some reason Mr Browning's attentions to his daughter were so little agreeable to Mr Barrett, that the marriage finally took place without his knowledge or consent. Sad to say, the breach thus caused was

never filled up, for Mr Barrett never afterwards either saw or held communication with her. This was the only cloud upon a connection that proved singularly felicitous throughout in the closeness of its sympathy, and its wealth of mutual happiness. In their new home the Casa Guidi, an old palace in Florence, the poetess found fresh mental stimulus, not only in the events of her new domestic relations, but also in the society of appreciative friends, and the political changes through which Italy was then passing. There was no more ardent champion of the cause of Italian unity than she, and much of her work from this time onward, such as *Casa Guidi Windows* (1851) and *Poems before Congress* (1860), voices with a passionate interest and intensity the aspirations of the land of her adoption. She was not privileged to witness the final triumph of the cause she had loved so well, and laboured for so strenuously. She was very ill when Count Cavour, the great Italian statesman and patriot, died prematurely. This event gave her a great shock, and probably hastened her end. She died gently in the arms of her husband on the 30th of June 1861. The grateful Florentines have placed upon the Casa Guidi a marble tablet bearing an inscription, in which the national gratitude and admiration are warmly recorded.

All who came within the range of Mrs Browning's personal influence seem to have been surprised that an intelligence so large and vivid should have been lodged within a body so diminutive and fragile. Her most intimate friend, Miss Mitford, writing of her

before her marriage, says, 'She is so sweet and gentle, and so pretty, that one looks at her as if she were some bright flower.' And again she describes her as 'of a slight, delicate figure, with a shower of dark curls falling on either side of a most expressive face, large tender eyes, richly fringed by dark eyelashes, and a smile like a sunbeam.' Nathaniel Hawthorne, who, with his wife, saw much of the Brownings at Florence just before Mrs Browning's death, describes her as a 'pale, small person, scarcely embodied at all; at any rate, only substantial enough to put forth her slender fingers to be grasped, and to speak with a shrill, yet sweet tenuity of voice.' 'I can recall,' says Mrs Thackeray Ritchie, 'the slight figure in its thin black dress, the writing apparatus by the sofa, the tiny inkstand, the quill-nibbed pen—the unpretentious implements of her magic. She was a little woman; she liked little things, Mr Browning used to say.'

Mrs Browning was a true singer, a poet with an unquestionable inspiration. Hers was a nature so impassioned and aglow with intensest feeling as almost to suggest that no earthly woman, but some spirit from afar, was imprisoned within that fragile tenement of clay. Mr Browning, with an intelligible partiality, has given expression to the opinion that the much greater popularity of his wife's poems as compared with his own, was a just appraisement of their respective values—his, that of the mere craftsman; hers, that of the born and inspired singer. An interesting opinion, but one in which few, if any,

persons competent to judge will be found to agree with him. A lady friend had expressed her preference for his poetry, and Mr Browning replied, 'You are wrong—quite wrong—she has genius; I am only a painstaking fellow. Can't you imagine a clever sort of angel who plots and plans, and tries to build up something—he wants to make you see it as he sees it —shows you one point of view, carries you off to another, hammering into your head the thing he wants you to understand; and whilst this bother is going on, God Almighty turns you off a little star—that's the difference between us. The true creative power is hers, not mine.' Her passionate sympathy with all forms of suffering in her fellow men is a very real quality in her. In every line there throbs a deeply humane soul, anguished by the burden and the pain that fall on others as they have also fallen on herself. To a far greater extent than is common, feeling dominated her poetry, as it did her nature and her life.

Great, however, though Mrs Browning's poetry is in all essentials, in its more external qualities we find many faults. She herself vehemently repelled the charge of carelessness and indifference to correct form, so that we are compelled to explain her many poetical shortcomings and offences by supposing them to be due to an inherent defect of taste and judgment. Few of her poems can be said to approach perfection; few, indeed, are free from blemishes that irritate by their appearance of perversity. Neither her rhythm

nor her rhyme is good. She needlessly revives obsolete words, and as needlessly makes new ones. She mars many a noble passage by lapses into harshness and the veriest prose. Nor is she always free from obscurity; on the contrary, there is sometimes the suspicion that she herself has only half understood the thought she wanted to express. If, therefore, notwithstanding these and other faults, her poetry is still regarded with favour, it must be taken as a testimony to its inherent power and nobleness.

Her first work, given to the world anonymously and not afterwards republished, was *An Essay on Mind and other Poems* (1826). It was, however, a translation of the *Prometheus Bound* of Æschylus, accompanied by other Poems, in 1833, that first made her known to the public. This was followed by *The Seraphim* in 1838, the *Romaunt of the Page* in 1839, and in 1844, *Poems*, including the *Drama of Exile*, in which both the subject and the manner of Milton's great epic are imitated, though without conspicuous success. In the same volume appeared *The Vision of Poets*, *Lady Geraldine's Courtship*, one of her most memorable poems, *The Lay of the Brown Rosarie*, *The Duchess May*, *The Lost Bower*, *A Child Asleep*, *The Cry of the Children*, which first appeared in *Blackwood*, and is said to have hastened legislation dealing with the case of poor children employed in factories, *The Romance of the Swan's Nest*, *The Dead Pan*, and many others, in which the fully developed powers of the poet, together with her manifest faults, are dis-

tinctly to be seen. In the rush of the newly-found happiness that entered her life with her acquaintance with Mr Browning, she wrote, but did not publish till 1850, four years after her marriage, the famous forty-four *Sonnets from the Portuguese*, which were so named from a suggestion of Mr Browning, but which had no connection whatever with the Portuguese. Here, more than anywhere else, we see the full power of the writer, who, in these poems, bares her whole soul to the view, as she sings with a lyrical power and an intensity of passionate feeling the new joys that have come into her life. Never, perhaps, has wife offered such a tribute to a husband, and in very few instances has the sonnet in English literature been used with equal force and mastery. They are entitled to rank with the very best poems in this form.

Mrs Browning herself considered *Aurora Leigh*, published in 1856, the most mature of her works, and the one into which her highest convictions upon Life and Art had entered. Her view was supported by its great popularity with the general public, but the critics have been more discriminating in their praise. They have been ready to acknowledge the abundance of poetical material, the moments of high suggestion, the many beautiful passages which this poem contains, but they have also pointed out its want of method, its ignorance of real life, its numerous digressions and frequent lapses into prose. Neither the situations nor the characters are dramatically conceived or well delineated. Her shorter pieces will no doubt form

a far more certain and durable foundation for her reputation.

Two volumes devoted to the cause of Italy appeared in these later years, *Casa Guidi Windows* in 1851, and *Poems before Congress* in 1860, the year that preceded Mrs Browning's death. *Last Poems* were published by her husband after her death in 1862.

Matthew Arnold (1822-1888). The poetry of the later Victorian period has, on the whole, a strenuous and serious note befitting the deep problems of life and destiny with which so much of it has concerned itself. It is certainly not made brighter by the fact that in the perils of this great quest, the poet has too often lost both the vision of faith and the joy of hope. Its gloom is sometimes oppressive, and if despair be not its dominant note, at least it constantly vibrates to the minor chord of a wistful yearning and a painful unrest. Even Tennyson and Browning, both of them poets of faith and hope, were not able altogether to rise superior to this prevailing influence of Victorian poetry.

But it is Mr Matthew Arnold who represents, more than any other writer, these new tendencies in latter-day poetry. A deep sadness hangs around his verse. Yet is he sincere and reverent. The agnostic doubt has cast its gloom upon him, but has not succeeded in expelling the religious spirit from his soul. Like his master, Wordsworth, he would fain gather a lesson of

joy and sweet content from all he sees and knows, but grieves to find it impossible. This alone, perhaps, would prevent Arnold from ever being extensively popular. The mass of men like sunshine, and will not readily forego it, even in their poetry. But there are other causes why they should not favour Arnold. Admitting the flawless beauty and classic perfection of much of his work, it must also be admitted that there is in it a certain coldness which checks enthusiasm. He seems to speak to us calmly indeed, but yet somewhat sadly, and with just a touch of scorn, from some serene height, the air of which would no doubt be such as one of his own Greek gods would approve, but which is too rare and chill for ordinary mortals. In other words, the heart is not moved by his poetry. It is the intellectual, rather than the emotional element, one feels in it. However much one may be impressed by the clear-cut precision of his language, the fine lucidity of his ideas, and the charm of perfect grace with which they are expressed, we miss the pathos, the passion and the warmth of human sympathy that swiftly and inevitably go to the heart. When he does break through the control thus placed on his emotions, he shows that if his poetry wants warmth, it is not because he himself is cold. The same fact is borne out by the *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, just published (1896). They are disappointing in various respects; they scarcely seem worthy of his great reputation; and especially in his literary judgments does he seem to come short of what we should

expect; but, on the other hand, they show the native simplicity, kindliness, and warmth of the man's character, and how admirable he was in all the domestic and ordinary relations of life.

His true poetical genius was probably held back from greater successes than it achieved, by the intellectual restraints of a too excessive academic culture. With less of the art and calculated labour of the perfect craftsman, there would doubtless have been seen in the effects produced more of the spontaneity of an original gift. Be this as it may, we doubt not that by reason of all its qualities, this poetry will continue to have its readers, fit though few; and it may even be that those critics shall be proved to be in the right who think that he only is entitled to rank with Tennyson and Browning as one of the trinity of greater poets of the Victorian era.

Matthew Arnold was the eldest son of the famous Dr Thomas Arnold, headmaster of Rugby, and was born at Laleham on the Thames, on the 24th December, 1822. He was educated at Winchester and Rugby, and passed with the Balliol Scholarship to Oxford in 1841. Here he won the Newdigate prize for poetry with a poem on Oliver Cromwell, and finally graduated with second-class honours in 1844. In the following year he was elected Fellow of Oriel. His connection with the fine old university town, to which he was so singularly attached, was prolonged in later life by his appointment in 1857 to the Professorship

of Poetry—a position which he held with distinction for the ten following years.

In 1847 he had left Oxford to become Private Secretary to Lord Lansdowne, but on his marriage in 1851 he accepted the post of Lay Inspector of Schools, a position which he continued to hold until his death in 1888, and which made him widely influential in connection with his views as an educational reformer. His various writings, therefore, were only the recreations of a busy life, into which there necessarily entered much uncongenial drudgery. In 1848 appeared anonymously his first volume, *The Strayed Reveller and other Poems*. It was followed in 1853 by *Empedocles on Etna and other Poems*, and in 1858 by *Merope: a Tragedy*. In 1866 appeared a volume entitled *New Poems*, which, however, largely consisted of a reprint of poems already published. From that time to the close of his life, he was well-nigh silent in poetry, a fact which is probably to be accounted for by the somewhat cold reception which his poems had received at the hands of both the critics and the public.

Where almost everything is so beautiful in conception and so perfect in form and colour, it is difficult to particularise. It is generally agreed, however, that *The Forsaken Merman* represents the peculiar charm of Arnold's poetry at its highest and best. Mr Swinburne makes it the subject of an eloquent eulogium. 'The song,' he says, 'is a piece of the sea-wind, a stray breath of the air, and bloom of the bays and hills: its

mixture of mortal sorrow with the strange wild sense of a life that is not after mortal law—the childlike moan after lost love mingling with the pure outer note of a song not human—the look in it as of bright bewildered eyes with tears not theirs, and alien wonder in the watch of them—the tender, marvellous, simple beauty of the poem, its charm as of a sound or a flower of the sea, set it and save it apart from all others in a niche of the memory.'

Next to *The Forsaken Merman* may be placed *The Scholar Gipsy* and *Thyrsis*, both of them full of the personality of the writer, and reflecting the delights of old student wanderings around the ancient city on the Isis. *The Scholar Gipsy* describes a student of two centuries ago, who, partly driven by poverty, and partly lured by the sweet enchantment of the fields and flowers, abandons his books and becomes a gipsy. The sympathy of the writer is very manifest, and it scarcely needs that Clough should tell us that Arnold himself would sometimes gratify his taste for the sights and sounds of nature at the expense of his studies. *Thyrsis* is written in the same measure, and still further enshrines the author's delightful memories of Oxford life. It is a monody to commemorate Arthur Henry Clough, the most intimate of Arnold's student companions. It is a poem of the highest merit, and deserves comparison with the best work even of Milton, Shelley, and Swinburne in Elegiac poetry. The numerous pieces from Arnold's pen that are directly due to Greek influences have all a chaste

beauty of form, and the restfulness of a great calm. But of these it may be said that only the classical scholar can fully appreciate their worth. Among the best of them are *The Strayed Reveller*, *Fragment of a Chorus of a Dejaneira*, and *Empedocles on Etna*. In contrast with these are the poems which deal with subjects drawn from Oriental and Scandinavian sources, and which are marked by a deeper human interest. These poems are bathed in the light and atmosphere of the times described, and affect us strangely. The concluding passages of *Sohrab and Rustum*, for example, describing the anguish of Rustum on discovering that he has unwittingly slain his own son, are exceedingly fine, and show more of feeling than is common with this writer. In *The Sick King in Bokhara*, we see the same faithfulness to Oriental colour; while *Balder Dead* gives a most impressive rendering of the familiar Scandinavian legend. Of shorter poems deserving of notice, may be mentioned *Requiescat*, *Resignation*, and *Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse*. The following lines, so characteristic in their sadness and their want of faith, are from the beautiful and suggestive piece called *Dover Beach*.

'The sea is calm to-night.
The tide is full, the moon lies fair
Upon the straits;—on the French coast the light
Gleams and is gone; the cliffs of England stand,
Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay.
Come to the window, sweet is the night-air!
Only, from the long line of spray
Where the sea meets the moon-blanch'd land,

Listen! you hear the grating roar
Of pebbles which the waves draw back, and fling,
At their return, up the high strand,
Begin, and cease, and then again begin,
With tremulous cadence slow, and bring
The eternal note of sadness in.

. . . . . .

'The Sea of Faith
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furl'd.
But now I only hear
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,
Retreating, to the breath
Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear
And naked shingles of the world.
Ah, love, let us be true
To one another! for the world, which seems
To lie before us like a land of dreams,
So various, so beautiful, so new,
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;
And we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night.'

This other example of Arnold reflects an influence that was just as real in his case as that of the literature of the Greek classics—that of Wordsworth. It is taken from *The Buried Life*:

'Only—but this is rare—
When a beloved hand is laid in ours,
When, jaded with the rush and glare
Of the interminable hours,
Our eyes can in another's eyes read clear,
When our world-deafen'd ear
Is by the tones of a loved voice caress'd—
A bolt is shot back somewhere in our breast,
And a lost pulse of feeling stirs again.

The eye sinks inward, and the heart lies plain,
And what we mean, we say, and what we would, we know.
A man becomes aware of his life's flow,
And hears its winding murmur; and he sees
The meadows where it glides, the sun, the breeze.

'And there arrives a lull in the hot race
Wherein he doth for ever chase
That flying and elusive shadow, rest.
An air of coolness plays upon his face,
And an unwonted calm pervades his breast.
And then he thinks he knows
The hills where his life rose,
And the sea where it goes.'

Arnold's permanent place in English Literature will doubtless be determined by his work as a poet; nevertheless, for the last twenty years of his life he wrote almost nothing in poetry, but much in prose. He is a poet for the thoughtful and cultured, and for those who can appreciate a chaste beauty of expression springing directly from the conception within the writer's mind.

Those who came near to Mr Arnold assure us that people did not understand him, that a great many of his discussions on points of Christian doctrine were purely theoretical, and that at heart he was much nearer to ordinary Christians than he ever said. His recently published *Letters* contain many proofs of his intimate acquaintance with, and delight in the Bible. Still, it is not possible to overlook the fact that his divergence from orthodox Christianity was great. It is none the less interesting to know that Mr Arnold on the day of his sudden death, Sunday,

April 15, 1888, worshipped in Sefton Park Church, Liverpool, the church of which the Rev. Dr Watson (Ian Maclaren, author of '*The Bonnie Brier Bush*), is minister, and that commenting afterwards on one of the hymns that had been sung:

> 'When I survey the wondrous cross,
> On which the Prince of Glory died,'

he remarked to his friends that it was the finest hymn in the English language, and added, 'Yes, the Cross remaineth, and in the straits of the soul makes its ancient appeal.'

William Edmonstoune Aytoun (1813-1865), although scarcely entitled to be called great, influenced the course of Victorian literature materially, both indirectly through his work in the university class-room, and also directly by his communications to the press. Born in Edinburgh in 1813, he received his higher education at the University of his native city and afterwards in Germany. In 1840 he was called to the Scottish bar; and five years later was appointed to the Chair of English Literature in Edinburgh University. The duties of this Chair he continued to discharge with growing success until his death, combining with them, however, certain judicial functions as Sheriff of Orkney, an office to which he had been appointed by the Derby Government in 1852.

His first work, *Poland, Homer, and other Poems*, was published when the writer was seventeen years

of age. In 1840 he produced *The Life and Times of Richard I.;* and in the same year he began his *Lays of the Scottish Cavaliers*, on which his reputation as a poet chiefly rests. These, accompanied by other poems, were published in 1849, and show the influence of Scott's romantic ballad style, and also suggest the similar work of Macaulay in *The Lays of Ancient Rome.* They nowhere reach the higher levels of poetry, but are marked by a vivid rushing energy, patriotic ardour, and a glow of romantic sentiment, that have all contributed to keep them popular through the many editions into which they have run.

Aytoun, like his father-in-law, Professor John Wilson (Christopher North), wrote much for *Blackwood*, achieving brilliant and happy effects, especially in such short stories as *The Glenmutchkin Railway*, and *How I became a Yeoman*, in which he displays a rich humour, racy of the soil. In 1854, in conjunction with his fellow-townsman, Mr, now Sir, Theodore Martin, he produced the *Bon Gaultier Ballads*, a series of clever burlesques and parodies of other writers. *Firmilian: a Spasmodic Tragedy*, which Aytoun published in 1854 under the pseudonym of Percy T. Jones, satirises cleverly the faults of a group of poets to whom Aytoun gave the name of the Spasmodic School. His long narrative poem *Bothwell* (1856), and his novel *Norman Sinclair* (1861), introducing events connected with the disastrous railway mania, were less successful. He was also the author of an

edition of *The Ballads of Scotland* (1858), and, in conjunction with Sir Theodore Martin, of a translation of the shorter *Poems and Ballads of Goethe* (1859).

The animation, the picturesqueness, and the romantic chivalry that mark this writer's serious poems are seen at their best in *The Island of the Scots*, from which the following extract, describing the crossing of the Rhine by the Scots, is taken :—

'The Rhine is running deep and red,
The island lies before—
"Now is there one of all the host
Will dare to venture o'er?
For not alone the river's sweep
Might make a brave man quail:
The foe are on the further side,
Their shot comes fast as hail.
God help us, if the middle isle
We may not hope to win!
Now is there any of the host
Will dare to venture in?"

. . . . . .

'No stay—no pause. With one accord
They grasped each other's hand,
And plunged into the angry flood,
That bold and dauntless band.
High flew the spray above their heads,
Yet onward still they bore,
Midst cheer, and shout, and answering yell,
And shot, and cannon roar—
"Now, by the Holy Cross! I swear,
Since earth and sea began,
Was never such a daring deed
Essayed by mortal man!"

'Thick blew the smoke across the stream,
And faster flashed the flame:
The water plashed in hissing jets
As ball and bullet came.

Yet onwards pushed the Cavaliers
All stern and undismayed,
With thousand armèd foes before,
And none behind to aid.
Once, as they neared the middle stream,
So strong the torrent swept,
That scarce that long and living wall
Their dangerous footing kept.
Then rose a warning cry behind,
A joyous shout before:
"The current's strong—the way is long—
They'll never reach the shore!
See, see! They stagger in the midst,
They waver in their line!
Fire on the madmen! break their ranks,
And whelm them in the Rhine!"

'Have you seen the tall trees swaying
When the blast is sounding shrill,
And the whirlwind reels in fury
Down the gorges of the hill?
How they toss their mighty branches,
Struggling with the tempest's shock;
How they keep their place of vantage,
Cleaving firmly to the rock?
Even so the Scottish warriors
Held their own against the river;
Though the water flashed around them,
Not an eye was seen to quiver;
Though the shot flew sharp and deadly,
Not a man relaxed his hold:
For their hearts were big and thrilling
With the mighty thoughts of old.
One word was spoke among them,
And through the ranks it spread—
"Remember our dead Claverhouse!"
Was all the Captain said.
Then, sternly bending forward,
They wrestled on awhile,
Until they cleared the heavy stream,
Then rushed towards the isle.'

When Professor Aytoun wrote his very clever satire, *Firmilian*, he had in his mind especially three contemporary poets, Philip James Bailey, Sydney Dobell, and Alexander Smith, whom he dubbed the 'Spasmodic School,' and whose prevailing faults and weaknesses he hit off with admirable effect. At first these poets had achieved a popularity far beyond their actual merits, and had been made the subjects of injudicious and excessive praise. The poetical hope of the future was supposed to be in them, and they, if any, were to bring back the greater achievements of British song. Naturally, therefore, Aytoun's brilliant satire, combining with the inevitable reaction in popular feeling, caused the pendulum of public favour to swing to the opposite extreme. As an actual fact justice has not been done to these poets, and although it would be hazardous to prophesy that there ever will be any sensible return of popular favour, it may be conceded that in all three are to be found qualities that far better justify critical approval than those of authors who have suffered no such reverse.

Philip James Bailey (1816), the oldest of the three, and the only one now surviving, was born at Nottingham in 1816. He received his university education at Glasgow, where he displayed that taste for metaphysical speculation which is so distinct a feature of his great work, *Festus*. This, his first poem, published in 1839, is also beyond comparison, his best. It was followed by *The Angel World* and *The Mystic*,

most of which were incorporated with *Festus* in the Jubilee edition of that work published in 1889. He also wrote *The Age: a Colloquial Satire.*

Considering that *Festus* deals with the most intricate problems of life and destiny, and that it runs to such an inordinate length (in the edition just referred to *Festus* is nearly twice as long as Browning's *The Ring and the Book*), it is sufficiently remarkable that it should have passed through so many editions, both in this country and in America. The attraction which it manifestly holds for certain classes of readers is no doubt due to the blending of poetical elements that often attain to a high degree of beauty and imaginative force with theological and philosophical speculation concerning the profoundest questions of life, death, and immortality. A glowing fervour of spiritual passion, an exuberant wealth of imagery, and a magnificent sweep of diction are all strikingly present in this poem, but these are mixed with so much extravagance, unevenness, and mere frothy declamation, and are, moreover, so wanting in human interest and spontaneity as to justify the censure implied in the name 'Spasmodic' which has been affixed to Bailey and the younger poets whom he is supposed to have influenced by his example. Mr Bailey still lives, but his reputation rests entirely on the work he did more than fifty years ago.

All these faults were exaggerated, and all these merits became less noticeable in the unequal and ill-balanced work of **Sydney Dobell** (1824). This poet,

who was born at Peckham Rye in 1824, published *The Roman* in 1850, and *Balder* in 1853; and these were followed by *Sonnets on the War*, and *England in Time of War*, both of them written in conjunction with Alexander Smith. Notwithstanding Dobell's glaring faults, it may be questioned if he had not a more genuine faculty than Bailey. Granting all that may be said about the thinness of the thought, and the triviality of the passion underlying so much inflated language, there remain passages of true lyrical power in which the writer approves himself an undoubted poet. He died in 1874 after many years of bad health, during which his voice was silent.

Alexander Smith (1830) was floated into fame on the same wave of popularity, and was flung back into an equally undeserved neglect when it turned. Born in 1830, at Kilmarnock, of humble parents, he had no advantages of education. When his poems first began to attract public attention, he was a drawer of patterns in a Glasgow muslin factory. In 1853 he published *A Life Drama and other Poems*, which, although severely criticised in many quarters, attained an extraordinary popularity. Much was expected from this youth of twenty-three, and because of his youth much was forgiven. The wonder regarding him was, not that he had failed to escape the danger of echoing other men's thoughts, but rather that he had produced so much that was original and promising, despite his early hardships and want of opportunity.

He continued to write poetry until his death in 1867 at the early age of thirty-seven. Meanwhile circumstances had on the whole been kind to him. Having been appointed Secretary to the University of Edinburgh, he found himself in cultured society, and amidst congenial associations, which he was not slow to improve. His successive works bear distinct traces of a growing command over himself and the resources of his art as a poet. Before leaving Glasgow he had composed his *City Poems*, which showed a considerable advance upon his earlier work. The development was still more noticeable in *Edwin of Deira*, which, however, had the misfortune to appear shortly after Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*, and suffered something like an eclipse in consequence.

Smith was a true singer notwithstanding the gush and thinness of some of his work; and no one can doubt that that work was every day growing into a greater richness and power, when death touched the singer's lips to silence. In *Alfred Hagart's Household*, a tale which he contributed to *Good Words*, he has sketched the circumstances of his own early life. *A Summer in Skye* describes, with an admirable command of prose style, what a poet's eye can see in that far island of the western seas. But it is upon his delightful and suggestive volume of Essays, *Dreamthorp*, that his reputation as a prose writer will chiefly rest. And however varied may be opinion respecting his poetry, no one capable of judging is likely to deny to these papers a very high excellence of style.

They are altogether charming, and have the additional attraction of presenting to us the modest, kindly, lovable personality of the writer himself in contact with the scenes and the authors he loved best. Alexander Smith does not deserve the neglect into which he has fallen, and it may be that for him, as for others, a time of revival is yet to come.

CHAPTER VI

Later Victorian Poets

Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882). — Dante Gabriel Rossetti will probably live in the record of Victorian Literature as much by the influence of his personality on other great men as by the genius that entered into his own works. His name is associated with an important revival in literature and art; and in certain respects he was well qualified, in virtue of strong magnetic qualities, to be the apostle of a new *renaissance*. Yet there was something almost cloistral in his indifference to the modern world around. The strife of politics had little or no interest for him. Literary and social questions passed him by unheeded. Even his knowledge of books was for a writer so distinguished, singularly limited. In some respects, therefore, his life was less the life of a man of the nineteenth century, than of the grey mediæval times from which he drew so much of the inspiration of his art, and so many of the subjects of his poetry. Many of our ablest men have borne testimony to his brilliant fascinations, and have cordially acknowledged their

obligations to him. Few men can have had a larger number of devoted friends. He knew Ruskin, Alfred Tennyson, and the Brownings. Amongst his intimates in literature were Edmund Gosse, George Meredith, Hall Caine, Theodore Watts, William Sharp, Algernon Swinburne, and William Morris. In art his circle of friends included Holman Hunt, Millais, Burne Jones, Ford Madox Brown, Woolner the sculptor, and William B. Scott. Several of these have put on record their impressions of Rossetti's strange and powerful personality ; and to what we thus know respecting him, has recently been added the information contained in William Michael Rossetti's edition of his brother's Letters.

The main facts of Rossetti's life history can easily be stated. He was born in London in 1828. His father, Gabrielle Rossetti, was an Italian refugee, whose patriotic lyrics on the side of constitutional liberty had made him obnoxious to the Neapolitan government. He was a man of learning and fine artistic and literary taste, and is well-known as a poet and commentator on Dante. On taking up his abode in England, he became Professor in King's College, London, and in King's College School, his son, Gabriel Charles Dante, who afterwards altered his name to Dante Gabriel, was educated. On leaving school young Rossetti gave himself to painting, towards which from a very early age he had been strongly disposed. He studied at the Royal Academy, but not long enough to master all the technicalities of

his art. Consequently his drawing was always defective, although as a painter he lived to become famous for the imaginative treatment of his subjects, and the mediæval richness of his colour.

In 1848 Rossetti became the centre of a movement in art which was known under the name of *Pre-Raphaelitism*, and which for the few years it lasted attracted much attention. The principal members of the so-called *Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood* were Dante G. Rossetti, his brother William Michael Rossetti, Holman Hunt, Millais, Woolner, Collinson, and Stephens. There were others, such as Ruskin, Swinburne, William Morris, Burne Jones, and Ford Madox Brown who gave the movement their countenance without actually becoming members of the Brotherhood. The object of this association of eager and clever young enthusiasts was to emancipate art from the influence of a hampering tradition. They proposed to follow simplicity and truth in all things, and in the near study of nature to express earnestly and faithfully, not what convention required, but the painter's own individuality of conception. These principles they applied to poetry also, and their influence, modified by time, and freed from the element of extravagance, has undoubtedly been useful in the fields both of art and of literature. It was in the literary organ of the Brotherhood, known as *The Germ*, and commenced in 1850 to give expression to their views in art and poetry, that the earliest of Rossetti's writings were published, including in poetry *The Blessed Damozel*,

and in prose *Hand and Soul.* Poetry, in fact, had always had a greater attraction for him than art, and he was unquestionably right in his conviction that it represented in him a more perfect gift. But it was long before he could trust himself except only occasionally and in fugitive forms to publish what he had written.

After a long engagement extending over several years, Mr Rossetti was married in 1860 to Miss Elizabeth Eleanor Siddal, in whom he found both literary and artistic accomplishments. In the following year 1861, the poet published his first work, a volume of translations in verse from the early Italian poets, now known under the name of *Dante and his Circle*, to which was appended a notice that there would shortly appear a volume of original poems from the pen of the same author. But in 1862 his wife died from an overdose of laudanum, and, overwhelmed by gloom and despondency, Mr Rossetti buried in his wife's coffin the manuscript volume of poems which had been thus promised to the world. They were hers, he said, as much as his, and all his interest in them appears to have gone down with her into the grave. Seven years later, however, his interest revived. The permission of the authorities was obtained to reopen his wife's grave, and the poems were rescued from oblivion. They were published along with others in the following year, 1870, under the title *Dante at Verona and other Poems* and on the whole were well received. It was, however, concerning

this volume that Mr Robert Buchanan shortly afterwards wrote his unfortunate article entitled *The Fleshly School of Poetry*, an unprovoked attack which gave great pain to Mr Rossetti, and produced effects which never altogether left him. Mr Buchanan afterwards regretted having included Mr Rossetti in his strictures, and made him what amends he could. But the mischief was done. Rossetti had been a changed man since his wife's death. He still enjoyed the society of his friends, but the morbid element, which had always been present in him, had been deepening into a more habitual despondency. All this, of course, was greatly aggravated by so rude an assault from that outer world which, by this time, he had partially forsworn. A habit of insomnia set in, too frequently relieved by doses of the new drug, chloral; and as these were ever losing their effect, and ever being increased in amount, he gradually lost strength, and became a physical wreck, although the mind continued as vigorous as ever. Another volume, entitled *Ballads and Sonnets*, appeared towards the close of 1881, and on Easter Sunday, 1882, he died at Birchington-on-Sea, near Margate, in the fifty-fourth year of his age.

Never had man more loving and devoted service from his literary friends than Rossetti had from Hall Caine, Theodore Watts, and others during the dark years of his decline.

The Blessed Damozel first attracted literary attention to Rossetti. Written, as he tells us, in his nineteenth year, it is still the work by which he is most

widely known. It may not deserve the excessive praise bestowed upon it by many of his admirers, but some of its ideas are so exquisite that they could only have come from a poet of true genius. We find here, as also in other poems of his youthful period, a mystical element, corresponding somewhat with the symbolism of his earlier work in painting. Both would seem to suggest the note of Catholic devotion. But Rossetti was no Catholic, and in neither case did the quality referred to spring from any definite religious feeling: it only expressed an artistic preference.

No taste can be altogether insensible to the exquisite beauty of many of the lines of this poem.

'The blessed damozel leaned out
From the gold bar of Heaven;
Her eyes were deeper than the depth
Of waters stilled at even;
She had three lilies in her hand,
And the stars in her hair were seven.

Her robe, ungirt from clasp to hem,
No wrought flowers did adorn,
But a white rose of Mary's gift,
For service meetly worn;
Her hair that lay along her back
Was yellow like ripe corn.

. . . . . .

And still she bowed herself and stooped
Out of the circling charm;
Until her bosom must have made
The bar she leaned on warm,
And the lilies lay as if asleep
Along her bended arm.

. . . . . .

The sun was gone now; the curled moon
Was like a little feather

Fluttering far down the gulf; and now
She spoke through the still weather.
Her voice was like the voice the stars
Had when they sang together.'

The old ballad had a great attraction for Rossetti, and some of his best poems take this form. One of these, *The White Ship* is finely conceived, and in its straightforward truth and poignancy admirably expresses the spirit of the ballad. Berold, the butcher of Rouen, tells how the good ship went down with King Henry's son and all his merry company aboard, and how the stricken king having been told the tale by Berold, the sole survivor, 'never smiled again.'

The King's Tragedy, written shortly before the poet's death, is also in ballad form, and is of even finer quality, rising here and there into passages of great dramatic force, and using with powerful effect those supernatural elements which are seldom absent from Mr Rossetti's best work. It is the tale of the cruel murder of Scotland's poet-king in the Charterhouse of Perth as told by Catherine Douglas, afterwards known as Kate Barlass, in honour of her heroic act in barring the door with her arm against the king's assassins.

Sister Helen also takes its inspiration from the ancient ballad, and is no less intensely dramatic. It shows a love transformed to hate—a hate deep-rooted as the rocks, implacable as hell, willing to lose itself for ever, if only its revenge be full. There is something strangely gruesome in the weird and everchang-

ing refrain. The poet makes use of the old superstition that if an image in wax be made of a person, and that image be melted slowly before a fire, the person whom it represents will also dwindle and die in torment.

'"Why did you melt your waxen man,
Sister Helen?
To-day is the third since you began."
"The time was long, yet the time ran,
Little brother."
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
Three days to-day between Hell and Heaven!)'

The wondering child, her brother, goes upon the balcony, and thence conveys to her the messages of various riders, who in hot haste come from the dying man to entreat her to remove her curse. Of these is Keith of Keith his father:

'"Oh his son still cries, if you forgive,
Sister Helen,
The body dies but the soul shall live."
"Fire shall forgive me as I forgive,
Little brother!"
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
As she forgives between Hell and Heaven!)

"Oh he prays you, as his heart would rive,
Sister Helen!
To save his dear son's soul alive."
"Fire cannot slay it, it shall thrive,
Little brother!"
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
Alas, alas, between Hell and Heaven!)

. . . . . .

"O sister Helen, you heard the bell,
Sister Helen!

More loud than the vesper-chime it fell."
"No vesper-chime, but a dying knell,
Little brother!"
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
His dying knell, between Hell and Heaven!)
. . . . . .
"See, see the wax has dropped from its place,
Sister Helen,
And the flames are winning up apace!"
"Yet here they burn but for a space,
Little brother!"
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
Here for a space, between Hell and Heaven!)
. . . . . .
"Ah! what white thing at the door has cross'd,
Sister Helen?
Ah! what is this that sighs in the frost?"
"A soul that's lost as mine is lost,
Little brother!"
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
Lost, lost, all lost, between Hell and Heaven!)'

Of Mr Rossetti's poems many assign the highest place to *Rose Mary* in which his romantic imagination and command of supernatural elements are used with wonderful effect, although the execution of this poem is not of uniform excellence. There is also dramatic power of a high kind, after the manner of Browning, in *A Last Confession*—a poem in blank verse, revealing very subtle insight in the suggestion of character and in depicting the tragedy of a pair of lives. Mr Rossetti has written a larger number of noble sonnets than any other poet of our time. For this form he reserved the best of all his powers, and in it he achieved a success that will be absolutely unquestioned. In the collected edition of his poems is

to be found *The House of Life*—a sonnet sequence, consisting of a series of one hundred and one sonnets. But besides these there are many others, full of his ripest thought and richest imagination, some of them illustrative of pictures by himself and others, and some devoted to persons endeared to him by ties of love and friendship.

Christina G. Rossetti (1830-1894). Miss Rossetti, the sister of Dante G. Rossetti, was born in 1830, and largely inherited the genius and tastes of her very remarkable family. When she was sixteen, she had written a volume of verses, which her grandfather, Mr Polidori, published in 1847. It was not, however, till long after, that she became known by her quaint and remarkable poem, *The Goblin Market*, published in 1862. It was followed by *The Prince's Progress* (1866), *Sing-Song, a Book of Nursery Rhymes* (1872), *A Pageant* (1881), and several other volumes, both in prose and verse. Most of Miss Rossetti's later work is intensely devotional in its character, and reveals a nature strung to an almost saint-like ecstasy. Moreover, the spiritual fervour of these poems is no mere artistic mood assumed in sympathy with the forms of mediæval devotion as in her brother's case, but the genuine outcome of a personality steeped in the true spirit of passionate worship. But while their fervour is almost ascetic in its religious intensity, there is no trace of feebleness in them. They are strong both in intellectual and in artistic qualities.

In expression they are as finished and exquisite as in thought they are noble and elevating. Naturally we find in Miss Rossetti's work many traces of her brother's influence—his romanticism, his blending of the real and the ideal, his art in dealing with weird superstitions, the strange glamour of his mysticism, and the sombre gloom that forms the setting and background of his most distinctive work in literature. Yet in some respects the difference between brother and sister could not be greater. The religious sentiment, which in him never passes beyond an artistic mood, is the very warp and woof of Miss Rossetti's nature. The saintly purity and elevation of her poetry is fed by sorrows rather than by joy; yet is it suffused by the warm hues of memory, and the still brighter gleams of hope.

'Man's life is but a waking day
Whose tasks are set aright:
A time to work, a time to pray,
And then a quiet night.
And then, please God, a quiet night
Where palms are green and robes are white,
A long-drawn breath, a balm for sorrow,—
And all things lovely on the morrow.'

The history of Victorian poetry cannot show a truer inspiration, or any loftier or more humane spirit than Christina Rossetti's. The poetry of a life free from all taint of self, and entirely given up to loving service for others, was never more beautifully exemplified. Dark shadows of bereavement and of personal pain rested upon her closing years, but could

not embitter her gentle spirit, or obscure her spiritual outlook. After months of illness, she died on the 29th of December 1894, and on the occasion of her funeral two of her own poems, strikingly illustrative of what was most distinctive in herself as a woman and a poet, were sung. It is not merely, or even chiefly, because the goodness of the writer is so conspicuous in her poems, but rather because the poems themselves are at once so true and noble in conception, and so exquisite in artistic finish, that many are prepared to assign to Miss Rossetti the highest place among the women poets of English literature.

She was deeply attached to the Church of England, and many of her later poems in such collections as *Called to be Saints* (1881), *Time Flies* (1885), and *The Face of the Deep* (1892), have an adaptation to its services. But how different they are from most religious poems we know. In the piercing keenness of their spiritual vision, in the thrilling suggestiveness of their thought regarding the Unseen, in the almost perfect beauty of their form, and in the poignancy of their cry from the soul, they are like nothing else in recent literature. The sombreness of her poetry is not without relief:—

'Looking back along life's trodden way,
Gleams and greenness linger on the track;
Distance melts and mellows all to-day,
Looking back.

'Rose and purple and a silvery grey,
Is that cloud, the cloud we called so black

Evening harmonises all to-day,
Looking back.

'Foolish feet, so prone to halt or stray;
Foolish heart, so restive on the rack!
Yesterday we sighed, but not to-day,
Looking back.'

Of Miss Rossetti's romantic method the following lines, forming the conclusion of *he Prince's Progress*, a poem of her earlier period, may be taken as an example:—

'Too late for love, too late for joy,
Too late, too late!
You loitered on the road too long,
You trifled at the gate:
The enchanted dove upon her branch
Died without a mate;
The enchanted princess in her tower
Slept, died, behind the grate;
Her heart was starving all this while
You made it wait.

'Ten years ago, five years ago,
One year ago,
Even then you had arrived in time,
Though somewhat slow;
Then you had known her living face
Which now you cannot know:
The frozen fountain would have leaped,
The buds gone on to blow,
The warm south wind would have awaked
To melt the snow.

'Is she fair now as she lies?
Once she was fair;
Meet queen for any kingly king,
With gold-dust on her hair.

Now these are poppies in her locks,
White poppies she must wear;
Must wear a veil to shroud her face
And the want graven there:
Or is the hunger fed at length,
Cast off the care?

'We never saw her with a smile
Or with a frown;
Her bed seemed never soft to her,
Though tossed of down;
She little heeded what she wore,
Kirtle, or wreath, or gown;
We think her white brows often ached
Beneath her crown,
Till silvery hairs showed in her locks
That used to be so brown.

'We never heard her speak in haste:
Her tones were sweet,
And modulated just so much
As it was meet:
Her heart sat silent through the noise
And concourse of the street.
There was no hurry in her hands,
No hurry in her feet;
There was no bliss drew nigh to her,
That she might run to greet.

'You should have wept her yesterday,
Wasting upon her bed:
But wherefore should you weep to-day
That she is dead?
Lo, we who love weep not to-day,
But crown her royal head.
Let be these poppies that we strew,
Your roses are too red:
Let be these poppies, not for you
Cut down and spread.'

Jean Ingelow (1830-1897) was born at Boston, Lincolnshire, in the same year as Miss Rossetti, and soon achieved a great popularity as a poet. In 1850 she published her first volume, entitled *A Rhyming Chronicle of Incidents and Feelings*. Several works in fiction followed, after which she gained a distinct success in a second volume of *Poems* in 1863. This volume contained much of her finest work, and was received with unstinted praise both by the critics and by the public. There could, in fact, be no doubt as to the powers of a writer who could produce such striking and beautiful poems as *Divided*, *The High Tide on the Coast of Lincolnshire*, *Requiescat in Pace*, and various others in this volume. On the surface of these poems lay the sweet, gentle womanliness of the writer. There was a great charm for readers in general in the directness and simplicity of her style. Ordinary themes were dealt with in simple Saxon language, yet with a sufficient freightage of thought. When she touched the chords either of some gentle familiar emotion or of some strong passion, it was in a manner convincing and agreeable to the great majority of readers. Her absolute sincerity was beyond all question. But the qualities of a higher gift were there also—imagination, earnestness of feeling, the power to realise the varying moods and aspects of nature, and—her most distinctive quality—an unfailing lyrical gift of exceptional sweetness and melody. Such qualities were more than sufficient to counterbalance her chief fault—an occasional diffuseness.

In 1867 Miss Ingelow published *A Story of Doom and other Poems.* The namepiece of this volume, which takes for its subject The Deluge, is her longest work in verse, and is on rather more ambitious lines. On the whole, it cannot be said to have reached the excellence of her shorter pieces.

In a later volume of Poems (1885), some excellent specimens of this writer are to be found. *Echo and the Ferry* shows the charmingly sympathetic comprehension of childhood, which is one of the most noticeable qualities of Miss Ingelow :—

'Ay, Oliver! I was but seven, and he was eleven ;
He looked at me pouting and rosy. I blushed where I stood ;
They had told us to play in the orchard (and I only seven!
A small guest at the farm) ; but he said "Oh, a girl was no good! "
So he whistled and went, he went over the stile to the wood.
It was sad, it was sorrowful! Only a girl—only seven!
At home in the dark London smoke I had not found it out.
The pear-trees looked on in their white, and blue birds flashed about,
And they too were angry as Oliver. Were they eleven?
I thought so. Yes, every one else was eleven—eleven!
So Oliver went, but the cowslips were tall at my feet,
And all the white orchard with fast-falling blossom was litter'd ;
And under and over the branches those little birds twitter'd,
While hanging head downwards they scolded because I was seven.
A pity, a very great pity. One should be eleven.
But soon I was happy, the smell of the world was so sweet,
And I saw a round hole in an apple-tree rosy and old,
Then I knew! for I peeped, and I felt it was right they should scold!
Eggs small and eggs many. For gladness I broke into laughter ;
And then some one else—oh, how softly! came after, came after,
With laughter—with laughter came after.

. . . . . .

I dreamed of the country that night, of the orchard, the sky,
The voice that had mocked coming after and over and under.
But at last—in a day or two namely—Eleven and I
Were very fast friends, and to him I confided the wonder.
He said that was Echo. Was Echo a wise kind of bee
That had learned how to laugh: could it laugh in one's ears and then fly
And laugh again yonder.

After many delightful child imaginings, the poem ends thus:—

'Ay, here—it was here that we woke her, the Echo of old;
All life of that day seems an echo, and many times told.
Shall I cross by the ferry to-morrow, and come in my white
To that little low church? and will Oliver meet me anon?
Will it all seem an echo from childhood pass'd over—pass'd on?
Will the grave parson bless us? Hark, hark! in the dim failing light
I hear her! As then the child's voice, clear and high, sweet and merry;
Now she mocks the man's tone with "Hie over! Hie over the ferry!"
"And Katie!" "And Katie!" "Art thou with the glow-worms to-night?
My Katie?" "My Katie!" For gladness I break into laughter
And tears. Then it all comes again as from far-away years;
Again, some one else—oh, how softly! with laughter comes after,
Comes after—with laughter comes after.'

No other justification of Miss Ingelow's great popularity as a poet is required than such fine pieces as *The High Tide* and *Divided*, which will always most readily recall her name. She is also, however, the author of several tales in prose, marked by vigour of imagination and power, especially in the delineation of child character. Such are *Studies for Stories* (1864), *Off the Skelligs* (1872), and *Fated to be Free* (1873). Miss Ingelow died at Kensington on July 20th, 1897.

Algernon Charles Swinburne (1837), the greatest of English poets now living, was the son of Admiral Swinburne, and was born in London in 1837. He received his education at Eton and Balliol College, Oxford, which he left without a degree in 1860. His first literary production was a volume containing the two plays, *The Queen Mother* (Catherine de Medici) and *Rosamond*, published in 1860. Since that time he has produced about thirty volumes of prose and verse, no less remarkable for their high excellence of form than for the marvellous productiveness they exhibit. Concerning the verse, it may be said that poetry has never been presented in shapes more exquisite and harmonious, and that the English language has never been used either with a more complete mastery or with a more dangerous affluence. There are times when Swinburne seems to be intoxicated with his own metrical and verbal facility, and when thought well-nigh disappears behind the cloud of beautiful words.

It was not till the publication of *Atalanta in Calydon* in 1865, that he won the ear of the public. In none of his later work has he outdone this early success. In the same year, 1865, appeared *Chastelara*, the first of the trilogy of tragedies in which the unfortunate Mary Queen of Scots is the central figure. In *Bothwell* (1874), the strongest of the group, and *Mary Stuart* (1881), his conception of the ill-fated princess is further elaborated; and if the character of heartless, cruel voluptuousness which the

poet assigns to her, do not commend itself to everyone's sympathy, there is no denying the power with which the delineation is effected. These tragedies, especially the last two, are remarkable for the length to which they run, and the number of personages they introduce, characteristics which effectually put them beyond the pale of acting plays.

The *Poems and Ballads* (1866) that succeeded *Chastelard* were as fiercely blamed by some as they were unduly praised by others. On the whole, however, the blame predominated. The promise of these poems—and for that matter their achievement also—was no doubt immense. Nothing could well exceed either the command of language or the mastery of metrical form and lyrical melody which they displayed. In these respects they were a revelation to all true lovers of the muse. On the other hand, they were out of touch with the times, and wanting in any clear message to them. Their charm of rhythmic beauty, their wealth of exquisite imagery, their depth of impassioned feeling have for their object the glorification of sense, and take no account of the inner and higher beauties of spirit. In the frankness of their pagan worship of the outwardly beautiful, they show a want of restraint, which elicited very vehement remonstrances. It is to be feared that these objections were only partially met by the plea that the poems are intended to depict how certainly the sensuous produces satiety, and leads the soul to seek its satisfaction in a wiser

and more inward conception of life. However that may be, Mr Swinburne, profiting by experience, did not again offend against popular feeling in anything like the same degree. A second series of *Poems and Ballads* was published in 1878, and a third in 1879, but in these the poet shows greater restraint.

It is still, however, little else than a pagan sentiment that reveals itself in *Songs before Sunrise* (1871), in which the poet gives earnest expression to his views as a non-theist and republican. In *Erechtheus* (1876) he recurs to Greek models, and in *Tristram of Lyonesse* (1882), as also in a quite recent work from his pen, *The Tale of Balen* (1896), he shows his fine handling of the Arthurian legend. In *A Century of Roundels* (1883) he reveals his unique acquaintance with French poetical forms. In the drama, besides the Mary Stuart Trilogy, he has produced *Marino Faliero* (1885), *Locrine* (1887), and *The Sisters* (1890).

Astrophel and other Poems, published in 1894, showed no falling off in Mr Swinburne's powers. All his characteristic qualities are here. The metrical facility and the verbal affluence are as wonderful as ever; but there is the same elusiveness of thought and barrenness of impulse as before. We close the book feeling that we have feasted high on sweet sounds, that a divine singer has been entertaining us with his heavenly music; but all else is vague and indefinite. The name piece of the volume *Astrophel*, describes the poet's feelings in reading within the garden of an old English manor house, the Arcadia of Sir Philip Sidney,

the Astrophel of three hundred years ago. A nature poem, *Nympholet*, is more important, and affords admirable opportunity for judging of the characteristics of Swinburne's art. One of the best pieces, inscribed to Mr Theodore Watts, and entitled *On the South Coast*, describes what the poet, aided by his imagination, sees in a seaward landscape of southern England. It is followed by an *Autumn Vision*, full of the exquisite modulations in metrical form so characteristic of this writer. There is a *Dedication* to William Morris, which also very favourably illustrates this author. The memorial verses to Tennyson, Browning, William Bell Scott, and others are not so felicitous.

Mr Swinburne's prose writings, which are chiefly in the form of criticism, are singularly eloquent. The defects of his verse, however, reappear in them. One noticeable but generous fault is a tendency to excessive praise. Moreover, they are often rendered vague and unconvincing by the over-luxuriance of the language and imagery employed. Still, his studies of old authors such as Shakespeare, Chapman, and Ben Jonson, and also of such modern writers as Charlotte Brontë, William Blake, Matthew Arnold, and Victor Hugo, are full of insight, and are a valuable addition to the literature of criticism.

Taking all this writer's work into account, we may say that Mr Swinburne well deserves his position as the greatest of English poets now living. He is entirely original; he is a consummate metrical artist; and if his verse is not free from inequalities, he has

accomplished an amount of work of the finest quality, to which no other contemporary poet can lay claim. His excellence lies not in any peculiar richness or fulness of thought, but rather in a unique beauty of expression. Probably no other poet has ever shown such a knowledge of English metrical form. Certainly no one has sung in such a variety of cadences—all of them beautiful. The melody of English speech, indeed, was never made so exquisite and memorable. Nevertheless, even here, where he is strongest, Swinburne shows the defects of his virtues. The music of his verse, so marvellously sustained, becomes monotonous, and the reader is apt to be cloyed by very excess of sweetness. And when the exquisitely turned rhythms and rhymes have had their effect, the mind, releasing itself from the dreamy languors into which it has been cast, inquires the cause, there may be nothing for answer but a vague impression shining through the cloud of rainbow-tinted phrases.

Mr Swinburne cannot be called a nature poet in the sense in which we apply the name to Wordsworth or Tennyson, although we may justly consider him as the greatest singer of the sea. His love for the sea is a consuming passion, and to every one of its changing moods, from calm to turbulence, he has given haunting expression in his verse.

William Morris (1834-1896) was born at Walthamstow, near London, and received his education at Marlborough and Exeter College, Oxford. From the

first, literature and art appear to have divided his sympathies. He contributed both articles and money towards founding *The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*. But when in 1856 he left the University, it was to article himself to Mr Street, the architect. This profession he soon abandoned.

His first volume, *The Defence of Guenevere and other Poems*, was not without marks of immaturity, but encouraged the hope of a brilliant future. In it we hear distinctly the keynote of his genius. Mr Morris was never the poet of the present. Even now it is in the dim remoteness of mediæval life that he finds his inspiration. Two of these pieces, *Sir Peter Harpdon's End* and *The Haystack in the Floods*, deserve especial mention. The latter sets before us the circumstances of an utterly unrelieved tragedy, such as might well attract admiring attention. The Lady Jehane is riding tired and wet in flight from Paris with her lover, Sir Robert, when they are stopped by an armed band under Godmar, his enemy and rival. They are overpowered, and the cruel choice is offered to the Lady Jehane of either accepting Godmar as her lover, or of first witnessing Sir Robert's death, and then of herself returning to Paris to encounter the ordeal of fire and water :—

> 'She laid her hand upon her brow,
> Then gazed upon the palm, as though
> She thought her forehead bled, and—"No,"
> She said, and turn'd her head away,
> As there were nothing else to say,
> And everything were settled.'

An hour, however, is given her to consider—

> 'So, scarce awake,
> Dismounting, did she leave that place,
> And totter some yards: with her face
> Turn'd upward to the sky she lay,
> Her head on a wet heap of hay,
> And fell asleep: and while she slept,
> And did not dream, the minutes crept
> Round to the twelve again; but she
> Being waked at last, sigh'd quietly,
> And strangely childlike came, and said:
> "I will not."'

Thereupon these two sad hearts would fain obtain the solace of but one poor kiss, but Godmar interposes, and with his own sword slays Sir Robert before her eyes.

> 'She shook her head and gazed awhile
> At her cold hands with a rueful smile,
> As though this thing had made her mad.
> This was the parting that they had
> Beside the haystack in the floods.'

In 1863 Mr Morris with the encouragement, if not the active participation, of such friends as D. G. Rossetti, Ford Madox Brown and E. Burne Jones, was engaged in launching a business firm devoted to the artistic treatment of house decoration in wall-papers, stained glass, and art fabrics. The business, rather contrary to expectation, proved a success, and indeed became of almost national importance in view of the revolution it accomplished in the appointments and decoration of the home. Since that time it has become common to expect in these appointments not

the useful only, but also beauty of colour and gracefulness of form. At first this firm had for its designation, 'Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Company,' but in later years it bore the name and was under the management of Mr Morris alone. In designing patterns for this firm, Mr Morris for many years found the chief occupation of his life.

No man, however, of our time has shown a greater vitality, a more restless and comprehensive energy. His joy in living was great, and fortune was kind. His tireless energy no less than his love of art was further seen in the setting up of the Kelmscott Press, from which he issued in sumptuous and beautiful forms reprints of various choice old books, including Chaucer. All of these were printed by the hand on a specially prepared paper, from type designed by Mr Morris himself. But even this was not enough for such energy as his. During the last fifteen years of his life he was one of the most strenuous workers in the Socialist propaganda. He appeared on many platforms, and ceased not to pour forth articles and pamphlets in the advocacy of his principles—principles to which, however, he was led less by social and political than by artistic considerations. Evidently his ambition was to revive amongst modern craftsmen the dignity, the intelligence, and the mastery of their art that were common in the days of the mediæval guilds.

It was while thus occupied, one man doing the work of three, that Mr Morris contrived to produce a quite unusual quantity of literature both of prose and verse.

In 1867 he gave to the world his *Life and Death of Jason*, a long poem in seventeen books, in which he took Chaucer as his model, and in which he achieved his first literary success. In the series of beautiful tales in verse entitled *The Earthly Paradise* (1868-70) which followed, he adhered to the same model, and further established his reputation as the best teller of stories in verse since the Father of English Poetry wrote the *Canterbury Tales*.

The argument prefixed to the prologue of *The Earthly Paradise* is as follows: 'Certain gentlemen and mariners of Norway, having considered all that they had heard of the Earthly Paradise, set sail to find it, and after many troubles and the lapse of many years came old men to some Western Land of which they had never before heard. There they died, when they had dwelt there certain years, much honoured of the strange people.' It was the custom of this kindly folk to hold two feasts every month, at each of which it was agreed to tell a tale, and hence the twenty-four tales of *The Earthly Paradise*, with the beautiful lyrics by which they are connected. Through all the great length of these poems, the verse flows sweetly, with many restful modulations. There is no stress of emotion, no harrowing anguish of circumstance, no rugged, harsh outlines of character. All seems remote, the voices come to us softened by distance, the men and women are seen as through a refining medium. The peace and glamour of an ideal world wrap us in their dreamy haze. A gentle

sadness runs through all these poems, and is, indeed, characteristic of this writer's work throughout. The wine of life ran full enough within the veins of the poet himself, but he gives us no sound of human laughter in his verse. The absence, if not the defect, of humour is everywhere apparent. But no less apparent is the absence of any sympathetic recognition of the serious tragedy of nineteenth century life. That it was not the poet's purpose to act the part of seer, to denounce the wrongs, to solve the mysteries, or to depict the anguish of life, may be gathered from his modest introduction to these poems:

'Of Heaven and Hell I have no power to sing,
I cannot ease the burden of your fears,
Or make quick coming death a little thing,
Or bring again the pleasure of past years,
Nor for my words shall ye forget your tears,
Or hope again for aught that I can say,
The idle singer of an idle day.

. . . . . .

'The heavy trouble, the bewildering care
That weighs us down who live and earn our bread,
These idle verses have no power to bear;
So let us sing of names rememberèd,
Because they, living not, can ne'er be dead,
Or long time take their memory quite away
From us poor singers of an empty day.

'Dreamer of dreams, born out of my due time,
Why should I strive to set the crooked straight?
Let it suffice me that my murmuring rhyme
Beats with light wing against the ivory gate,
Telling a tale not too importunate
To those who in the sleepy region stay,
Lulled by the singer of an empty day.'

Perhaps just because of this dreamy aloofness from the heart-sorrow and stress of present day needs and burdens, these long poems of Morris cannot be accorded the highest place even in the history of his own art. He has never been extensively popular. By many of the educated class he has been warmly appreciated; but there is an irony in the circumstance that the toiling masses to whom he gave so much of his life know him but little.

His later work, *Sigurd the Volsung* (1877) reaches a higher elevation, and is perhaps in closer touch with modern life; but it also is open to the objection that it deals with what to us must be a world of dreams and shadows, too vague and remote from modern circumstances to be capable of arousing any warmth of sympathy in nineteenth century readers. The powerful attraction which the ancient Norse imaginations had for Mr Morris may be seen in the number of translations from the Icelandic done by him in conjunction with Mr Magnusson. Of these are *The Story of Grettir the Strong* (1869) and *The Story of the Volsungs and the Niblungs* (1870). Among the recreations of this busy life were translations of the *Æneid* and the *Odyssey*. The leisure of his later years, however, was chiefly given to the production of a number of tales full of the fresh and romantic spirit of an early world. These, to many minds, proved most attractive. Some of them were in prose, and some partly in prose and partly in verse. Thus there appeared in rapid succession, and in outward

forms befitting their archaic character, *The House of the Wolfings*, *The Roots of the Mountains*, *The Glittering Plain*, *The Wood Beyond the World* (1894), and *The Well at the World's End* (1896), the latter issued only just before his death.

Lord de Tabley (1835-1895), better known in earlier life as John Leicester Warren, was educated at Eton and Christ Church, Oxford. Between 1864 and 1873 he published a succession of volumes containing poems, metrical dramas, and novels. After 1873, apparently because of insufficient encouragement, he wrote no more verses, until in 1893 he was once more induced to come before the public with a volume made up partly of new pieces, and partly of a selection from his earlier volumes. This dainty and beautiful volume was received with great cordiality, and full justice was done to the calm, chaste, somewhat statuesque beauty of the style, and the elevation of thought, feeling, and imagination which these poems displayed. *Jael* and *Pandora* are noteworthy specimens of this author's manner and power. In 1895 he produced a second volume, *Poems, Dramatic and Lyrical*, containing such fine work as *Orpheus in Hades*, *The Death of Phæthon*, and *Circe*. In these, as in most of the poems of this author, we see the poet of culture, choosing his subjects chiefly from the old Greek myths, and casting only an occasional glance over the turbulent moods and passions of modern life and society. Behind their

classic beauty of conception and of form, one seems to hear, subdued to distance, the

> 'Still music of forgotten shapes,
> Dim pathos of a Pagan soul.'

On the whole it is a Pagan sentiment, grave, acquiescent, coldly tender, never hopeful for the future, never really glad in the present, that is the prevailing mood of this poetry.

> 'Why should we tax the gods with woe?
> They sit outside, they bear no part,
> They never wove the rainbow's glow,
> They never built the human heart.
>
> 'These careless idlers who can blame?
> If Chance and Nature govern men:
> The universe from atoms came,
> And back to atoms rolls again.
>
> 'As earthly kings they keep their state,
> The cup of joy is in their hands;
> The war-note deepens at their gate,
> They hear a wail of hungry lands.
>
> 'They feast, they let the turmoil drive,
> And Nature scorns their fleeting sway:
> She ruled before they were alive,
> She rules when they are passed away.
>
> 'Before the poet's wistful face
> The flaming walls of ether glow:
> He sees the lurid brinks of space,
> Nor trembles at the gulfs below.
>
> 'He feels himself a foundering bark,
> Tossed on the tides of Time alone.
> Blindly he rushes on the dark,
> Nor waits his summons to be gone.'

Robert William Buchanan (1841) is a poet of such an undoubted faculty that one wonders that he should be so little known. It is certainly not because his poems lack interest. Nor is it because they are either limited in quantity or inferior in power. Their range is exceedingly wide, and they throb with an intense, sometimes almost a painful, interest. Still less can it be said of Mr Buchanan, as it might with justice be said of Mr William Morris, that he stands aloof from present day needs and circumstances. No one could utter more plainly the burden of ordinary human joy and sorrow. It is, therefore, the more surprising that he should be comparatively unappreciated, while the claims of writers who do not deserve to be mentioned along with him are persistently pressed upon the public notice. This is much to be regretted, for Mr Buchanan, if we mistake not, is a poet who, notwithstanding inequalities, has scarcely any superiors among English poets now living.

Robert Buchanan was born in Staffordshire in 1841. His father was proprietor of a Glasgow newspaper and a journalist by profession. It was no doubt thus that Robert Buchanan received his bent towards literature. He was educated at the High School and University of Glasgow, where he made the acquaintance of David Gray, the author of *he Luggie*. In 1860 these youthful aspirants made their way to London, ambitious to win for themselves a name in the kingdom of letters. Poor Gray speedily succumbed, leaving London only to die. Buchanan, by dint of

energy, perseverance, and native genius, survived the hard struggle through which he had to pass, and fully realised the object of his ambition.

His first volume of poetry, *Undertones*, was published in 1860, and was followed five years later by *Idyls and Legends of Inverburn* (1865). The rawness of youth was to be seen in the first of these, as was also much that was suggestive and promising. In the second, and still more in the *London Poems* that followed in 1866, we see unmistakably a richly endowed poet, full of imagination, dramatic insight, humour, pathos, and an abundance of sympathy with the unintelligible anguish of life that so often meets us in the lowest human forms. Here was no playing with the gossamer hues of air-spun fancies. There is a terrible earnestness in these poems ; and if at times we are tempted to revolt against the plainness with which the almost hopeless enigmas of life are set forth, we find comfort in the representation, again and again repeated, that after all the bad is not altogether bad, and that there is a saving leaven in human nature even at its worst. It is this that prevents such poems as *Liz*, *Ratcliffe Meg*, and *Nell*, from being positively repulsive. The *North Coast Poems* (1867) are full of the same sympathetic humanity, and deal with similar problems of common life, only substituting the scent of the heather and the salt breath of the long waves that beat upon northern shores for the pallid air of London streets. When we read such poems as *Meg Blane* or *The Scaith of Bartle*, we are confronted with forms of

human wrong and anguish that scarcely admit of earthly alleviation. Yet, after all, there is comfort in this poet's view, even though it should be found only in the peace and solace of the great reconciler—death.

In the *Coruisken Sonnets* and the *Book of Orm* (1870), the poet appeals to a more cultivated public; but still occupied with the same perplexing problems of life and destiny, can proclaim anew his generous gospel of hope. In their air of philosophical mysticism, these poems are more in accord with the prevailing tendencies of modern poetry; they hover around death, the grave, and the hereafter; they see even in such a conception of God as the poet has formed the operation of a boundless love. The *Book of Orm* contains some of the finest writing that has come from Mr Buchanan's pen. How weirdly conceived, for example, is *The Dream of the World without Death*, in which he shows how miserable we should be if our dear ones were only taken, and not visibly dead to us! But it is in *The Vision of the Man Accurst* that he rises to the climax of his poetical achievement. This is a work of powerful imagination, which thrills us with its high suggestion, and which, while it depicts the immeasurable divine pity, at the same time reveals the divinity of a purely human love. Kindred to this fine poem, and somewhat similar in treatment and in excellence, is a poem of a later time, *The Ballad of Judas Iscariot*. There is something strangely haunting and impressive in the manner in which the soul of the great betrayer is represented as

vainly seeking a resting place for the poor mangled body, and in which the Divine Master Himself is conceived as delaying the *Holy Supper* until the soul of Iscariot shall appear to share it:

'Twas the bridegroom stood at the open door,
And beckon'd, smiling sweet;
'Twas the soul of Judas Iscariot
Stole in, and fell at his feet.

'The Holy Supper is spread within,
And the many candles shine,
And I have waited long for thee
Before I poured the wine!

'The supper wine is poured at last,
The lights burn bright and fair,
Iscariot washes the Bridegroom's feet,
And dries them with his hair.'

Scattered through all Mr Buchanan's writings are passages of rare lyrical sweetness and melody. In such poems as the '*The Lights o' Leith*, he has caught with wonderful effect the simple and poignant spirit as well as the form of the ancient ballad. His pathos, of which there is no better example than this poem, is real and convincing. His humour is no less true, and finds an admirable illustration in the rollicking *Wedding of Shon Maclean*. The dramatic instinct is everywhere manifest in the way in which this poet seizes upon situations which give to the dramatist his opportunity, and also in the vividness with which he realises and portrays character. His narratives and descriptions of nature are marked by truth and realistic imagination.

Of Mr Buchanan's other works in poetry may be mentioned *Songs of the Terrible Year* (1870), suggested by the Franco-German War; *Political Mystics*, *Saint Abe and his Seven Wives*, *White Rose and Red*, *Balder the Beautiful*, *The City of Dreams*, *The Outcast* (1891), and *The Wandering Jew* (1893). Prose fiction and the drama have for some years engrossed most of Mr Buchanan's attention, and in both he has won considerable success.

From *The Lights o' Leith* the following extracts are taken. A ship is running for the port amidst a wintry gale of snow and hail; and through the surging spray the sailors see the town aflame with dancing lights. A boat is launched to take the skipper and the mate ashore. The latter tells the skipper how twenty years ago, he, the son of a drowned father, and an only child, ran away to sea; how he had thrice returned from his wanderings, always, although empty-handed, to receive the kindliest welcome from his poor old mother; and how, now that his wanderings are over, he will comfort her with his presence and the wealth he has acquired.

'And I lang, and lang, to seek ance mair
The cot by the side o' the sea,
And to find my grey old mither there,
Waiting and watching for me;

'To dress her oot like a leddy grand
While the tears o' gladness drap,
To put the rings on her wrinkled hand,
The siller intil her lap!

'And to say, "O mither, I'm hame, I'm hame
Forgie me, O forgie!
And never mair shall ye ken a care
Until the day you dee!"

'O bright and red shone the lights o' Leith
In the snowy winter-tide—
Down the cheeks of the man the salt tears ran,
As he stood by the skipper's side.'

Hurrying to his mother's cot, he finds it black and tenantless. Tortured by his fears, his cousin, 'lame Janet Wylie, frae Marywell,' finds him, and, after much urging, tells him a tale so horrible that life for him is no longer possible. Her story was, that the bent form of his old mother had come to be regarded as that of a witch, and that when the cowardly pedant, 'King Jamie,' was driven into port by stress of weather, search was made for the witches whose spells were believed to have caused the storm.

'"O Robin, dear Robin, hearken nae mair!"
"Speak on, I'll heark to the en'!"
"O Robin, Robin, the sea oot there
Is kinder than cruel men!"'

'They bade her tell she had wrought the spell
That made the tempest blaw;
They strippit her bare as a naked bairn,
They tried her wi' pincers and heated airn
Till she shriek'd and swoon'd awa'!

'O Robin, Robin, the king sat there,
While the cruel deed was done,
And the clergy o' Christ ne'er bade him spare
For the sake o' God's ain Son! . . .

'The lights o' Leith, the lights o' Leith!
Like Hell's own lights they glow,
While the sailor stands, with his trembling hands
Prest hard on his heart in woe!

'O Robin, Robin, . . . They doom'd her to burn . . .
Doon yonner upon the quay . . .
This night was the night . . . see the light!
How it burns by the side o' the sea!'

'. . . She paused with a moan. . . . He had left her alone,
And rushing through drift and snow,
Down the side o' the wintry hill he had flown,
His eyes on the lights below!

. . . . . .

'High up on the quay, blaze the balefires, and see!
Three stakes are deep set in the ground,
To each stake smear'd with pitch, clings the corpse of a witch,
With the fire flaming redly around!

What madman is he who leaps in where they gleam,
Close, close, to the centremost form?
"O mither, O mither," he cries with a scream
That rings thro' the heart of the storm!

'He can see the white hair snowing down thro' the glare,
The white face upraised to the skies—
Then the cruel red blaze blots the thing from his gaze,
And he falls on his face,—and dies.'

Writers of Society Verse.—There is a class of poets of much less strenuous note, who following the French modes, and often imitating French forms, in pure lightness of heart set themselves to amuse mankind. It is impossible not to be thankful to them. They have brought sunshine to the gloom of latter-day poetry, and added a new zest to living. As to

the question whether they are to be considered poets, or only makers of verse, we need not concern ourselves. They do not take their own work too seriously, and will probably be content if they have succeeded in making the world a gayer and brighter place than it was before.

The qualities of these writers are a dainty lightness of touch and an inimitable grace, wit, and good humour. In form and melody their verse is often perfect. The subjects of this *vers-de-société*, as it has been called, are frequently trivial, but they are touched with such archness and verve, they show such an exquisite taste and knowledge both of rhythm and of rhyme, that to the mind of the wearied reader they often yield a quite peculiar pleasure. Moreover, in the swift and unexpected transitions of this verse from gay to grave, in the flashes sent from its rainbow-tinted laughter into the sombre depths over which that laughter plays, is occasionally to be heard the note of what is not easily to be distinguished from true poetry. Those who have reached high excellence as writers of society verse are very few indeed, and it is of them only that these things are said. The inferior writers are numerous, and nothing can be more wearisome than most of their effusions.

The keynote of this verse was struck by **Winthrop Mackworth Praed** (1802-1839), the friend of Macaulay, and author of *The Red Fisherman*, although he belongs of right to the pre-Victorian period. Chronologically, the first and one of the best of our gayer minstrels,

is **Frederick Locker,** or Locker-Lampson as he was called after his second marriage. Mr Locker was born in 1821, and in early years saw service as a clerk in the Admiralty, although in later life he enjoyed a refined and cultured leisure. His *London Lyrics* (1857) have all the qualities of the best drawing-room verse—the gaiety, the exquisite finish and felicity, the playful humour and dash of pathos. Mr Locker-Lampson died in 1895. **Charles Stuart Calverley** (1831-1884) in *Verses and Translations* (1862) and *Fly Leaves* (1872) shows a similar happy gift of light and graceful rhyming.

It is **Mr Austin Dobson,** however, who takes the highest rank amongst these minstrels of the 'lighter lyre,' and has done the best work of this kind up to the present time. Mr Dobson was born at Plymouth in 1840, and like Mr Locker became clerk in a government office. He got part of his education abroad—a fact which probably accounts to a certain extent for the form which his genius took, and the manifest traces of a French influence upon his style. His works have been extremely popular, and are not likely to lose their fascination. In 1873 he published *Vignettes in Rhyme* and *Vers de Société;* in 1877, *Proverbs in Porcelain;* in 1883, *Old World Idylls,* a reprint of selections from the two preceding volumes; and in 1885, *At the Sign of the Lyre.* In these we have all the lightness and gaiety, facility and neatness, genial wisdom, pathos, and humour of the most perfect writing of this kind. If there is wit, it plays

harmlessly like summer lightning; if the inevitable evil shows itself, it is touched delicately; and notwithstanding so much of a Horatian and French influence manifest throughout, the purest may read these pages without a blush. There seems, therefore, a peculiar appropriateness in the dedication of his *Old World Idylls* not only to the toiling dwellers in towns and the many sad of heart, but also, and chiefly, to the modest English girl:—

> 'But most to you with eyelids pure,
> Scarce witting yet of love or lure;—
> To you, with bird-like glances bright,
> Half-paused to speak, half-poised in flight;—
> O English girl, divine, demure,
> To you I sing!'

How quaintly the manners and the very atmosphere of the eighteenth century are reproduced in such fine pieces as *The Ballad of Beau Brocade*, *A Dead Letter*, *A Gentleman of the Old School*, and *The Old Sedan Chair*, and with what an exquisite daintiness Molly Trefusis is placed before us!

> 'She was Cornish. We know at once by the 'Tre;'
> Then of guessing it scarce an abuse is
> If we say that where Bude bellows back to the sea
> Was the birthplace of Molly Trefusis.
>
> 'And she lived in the era of patches and bows,
> Not knowing what rouge and ceruse is;
> For they needed (I trust) but her natural rose,
> The lilies of Molly Trefusis.
>
> 'And I somehow connect her (I frankly admit
> That the evidence hard to produce is)

With Bath in its hey-day of fashion and wit,—
This dangerous Molly Trefusis.

'I fancy her, radiant in ribbon and knot
(How charming that old-fashioned puce is!)
All blooming in laces, fal-lals and what not,
At the pump-room—Miss Molly Trefusis.

. . . . . .

'He says she was 'Venus.' I doubt it. Beside,
(Your rhymer so hopelessly loose is!)
His 'little' could scarce be to Venus applied,
If fitly to Molly Trefusis.

'No, no. It was Hebe he had in his mind;
And fresh as the handmaid of Zeus is,
And rosy, and rounded, and dimpled—you'll find—
Was certainly Molly Trefusis!

. . . . . .

'And you'll find, I conclude, in the 'Gentleman's Mag,'
At the end, where the pick of the news is,
'On the (blank) at "the Bath," to Sir Hilary Brag,
With a fortune, Miss Molly Trefusis.'

Mr Andrew Lang (1844), better known as a versatile and accomplished prose writer, belongs to the same class of poets, although he has had his ventures into other realms of poetry besides. His most ambitious work in verse, *Helen of Troy* (1882), has the serious intent of seeking to rehabilitate the fair wife of Menelaus by showing that, in her flight with Paris, she was not a free agent, but the unwilling victim of the goddess Aphrodite, who by her spells thus led the unhappy queen to fateful Troy. The poem throughout is marked by the ease and felicity of expression, the scholarly grace and charm of narrative and descrip-

tion we expect in this writer; but it nowhere rises into any noteworthy elevation of manner or of sentiment. A more impressive example still of Mr Lang's serious verse is to be found in his beautiful sonnet entitled *The Odyssey*.

His lighter verse is to be found in *Ballads and Lyrics of Old France* (1872), *Ballades in Blue China* (1880), *Rhymes à la Mode* (1884), *Grass of Parnassus* (1888), and *Ban and Arrière Ban* (1894). These can hardly be said to reach the inimitable daintiness of Austin Dobson's best work, nevertheless they are choice specimens of the careless joyance, the sprightly wisdom, and many felicities in thought and expression of our gayer minstrelsy. The brightness and gaiety with which small things are handled may be seen in the following stanza from the *Ballades in Blue China*:—

> 'There's a joy without canker or cark,
> There's a pleasure eternally new,
> 'Tis to gloat on the glaze and the mark
> Of china that's ancient and blue;
> Unchipp'd all the centuries through
> It has pass'd, since the chime of it rang,
> And they fashion'd it, figure and hue,
> In the reign of the Emperor Hwang.'

From the first of these thirty-two poems, the finely turned *Ballade to Theocritus in Winter*, to the last of the series, the *Ballade of his Choice of a Sepulchre*, all are interesting, and illustrate happily the lightness and sureness of touch and many graces of this form of verse. But the last of these reaches a deeper note,

and is to be ranked among the poet's happier efforts.

'Here I'd come when weariest!
Here the breast
Of the windburg's tufted over
Deep with bracken; here his crest
Takes the west,
Where the wide-winged hawk doth hover.

'Silent here are lark and plover;
In the cover
Deep below the cushat best
Loves his mate, and croons above her
O'er their nest,
Where the wide-winged hawk doth hover.

'Bring me here, Life's tired-out guest,
To the blest
Bed that awaits the weary rover,
Here should failure be confessed;
Ends my quest
Where the wide-winged hawk doth hover!'

William Watson (1858). Of the poets that were still young when Lord Tennyson died, none was more frequently spoken of as a possible successor in the Laureateship than William Watson. It is true that there have been many other 'new' poets since that time, each of them duly acclaimed as the undoubted great singer whom the world has been expecting. And yet Mr Watson's position has not been seriously shaken. He may not equal in poetical genius, far less in amount of production, such poets as Swinburne and William Morris, but he can easily hold his own with the younger band of singers with whom so much of our poetical future lies. He reflects not a little of

the elevation and chaste dignity of the great masters of English song. His verse commends itself by the clarity of its thought, the lucidity and harmony of its expression, its artistic reserve, and freedom from the turbulence of overstrained emotion, which is so frequently to be found in our younger poets.

Mr Watson had to serve his art for many years before his merits as a poet obtained the recognition he has now won. Born in 1858 in Wharfedale, Yorkshire, he early went to live near Liverpool, and while still a youth, contributed poems to the newspaper press. In 1880, he produced his first volume of verse, *The Prince's Quest and other Poems*, written for the most part whilst he was still in his teens. The public were not greatly moved by it, but it won the approval of Dante Rossetti and other competent critics, who saw in it a work of exceptional promise. A series of poetical 'Epigrams' followed, but it was not till 1892 that the public attention was conquered by another small volume from his pen, entitled, *Wordsworth's Grave and other Poems*. There was here no froth of words or rant of passion. The reasonableness and weight of thought and the fine dignity and chastity of expression took hold of every reader. Something of the severe simplicity of his master, Wordsworth, is to be seen in this verse. He does not seek to startle by bizarre effects, still less to shock conventional feeling by outraging propriety or by tampering with deeply cherished beliefs. The general tone of his poetry is subdued to a twilight calm and soft-

ness. We may indeed apply to the poet himself what he has written in the first of the Epigrams:

> 'Tis human fortune's happiest height to be
> A spirit melodious, lucid, poised, and whole;
> Second in order of felicity
> I hold it to have walk'd with such a soul.'

Mr Watson's inspiration is real, although the fount from which it flows is not a copious one. He knows his limitations, and in the prelude to the volume just referred to, says:—

> 'The mighty poets from their flowing store
> Dispense like casual alms the careless ore;
> Through throngs of men their lonely way they go
> Let fall their costly thoughts nor seem to know.—
> Not mine the rich and showering hand that strews
> The facile largess of a stintless muse.
> A fitful presence, seldom tarrying long,
> Capriciously she touches me to song—
> Then leaves me to lament her flight in vain,
> And wonder will she ever come again.'

Of all the poetical tributes which the death of Tennyson in 1892 called forth, it was generally acknowledged that Watson's was one of the best. Republished in a small volume, entitled *Lachrymæ Musarum, and other Poems*, in the following year, it well sustained his reputation. This was still further accomplished by his *Odes, and other Poems*, published in 1894. Here, as in the other volumes, are traces of a shadowed life, of seasons of enforced idleness, and the pathos of grave and long-continued illness. But sad though his poetry sometimes is, it has no note of whining or

defiance. It looks abroad upon the problems of life with an eye into which pain has entered, but which, nevertheless, retains its serenity because it can see beyond the pain. The end of the century pessimism has no encouragement from Mr Watson. From all trial he emerges manful to new hope, courage, and trust. This is finely expressed in these beautiful lines from *Vita Nuova*:

> 'I too have come through wintry terrors—yea,
> Through tempest and through cataclysm of soul
> Have come and am delivered. Me the spring,
> Me also, dimly with new life hath touched,
> And with regenerate hope, the salt of life;
> And I would dedicate these thankful tears
> To whatsoever power beneficent,
> Veiled though his countenance, undivulged his thought,
> Hath led me from the haunted darkness forth
> Into the gracious air and vernal morn.'

This is, indeed, his message to the world, again and again repeated, as in these opening lines addressed to R. H. Hutton:

> 'Yes, I have had my griefs; and yet
> I think that when I shake off life's annoy,
> I shall in my last hour, forget
> All things that were not joy.'

It is impossible to say what Mr Watson's final position will be. Some have thought him cold, and miss in his verse the strong voice of passion, and that cry of the heart so often heard in recent poetry. It is also urged that he wants colour, that the landscape he depicts is of a too uniform greyness of tint. But surely a poet who, by his grave thoughtfulness, finely-poised

imagination, and perfection of poetical form suggests such masters as Milton, Gray, and Wordsworth has claims to be considered which cannot be lightly put aside. The fear with regard to him is lest the critical and reflective mood, which undoubtedly is strong, should crush out impulse, and thus dry up the fountains of his inspiration at their source. But a more valid objection to his claims to be considered a great poet is to be found in the meagreness of his production after so long a service in the cause of poetry.

Mr Watson's later volumes are full of fine things, which will bear reading many times. The following beautiful lines are from the *Ode to H. D. Traill*, one of the most striking poems in *Odes, and other Poems*, published in 1894:

'Tis from those moods in which life stands
With feet earth-planted, yet with hands
Stretched towards visionary lands,
Where vapours lift
A moment, and aërial strands
Gleam through the rift.

The poet wins, in hours benign,
At older than the Delphic shrine,
Those intimations faint and fine
To which belongs
Whatever character divine
Invest his songs.

And could we live more near allied
To cloud and mountain, wind and tide,
Cast this unmeaning coil aside
And go forth free,
The World our goal, Desire our guide—
We then might see

'Those master moments grow less rare,
And oftener feel that nameless air
Come rumouring from we know not where;
And touch at whiles
Fantastic shores, the fringes fair
Of fairy isle,

'And hail the mystic bird that brings
News from the inner courts of things,
The eternal courier-dove whose wings
Are never furled;
And hear the bubblings of the springs
That feed the world.'

In addition to the works already mentioned, Mr Watson has written *The Eloping Angels—a Caprice*, which, however, has added nothing to his reputation, also a clever volume of prose, entitled *Excursions in Criticism*, and *The Year of Shame* (1897), in which in sonnet form he gives indignant expression to his dissatisfaction with the supineness of England with regard to Turkish atrocities in Armenia.

John Davidson (1857). Since the publication of his *Ballads and Songs* in 1894, it has not been unusual to hear this writer spoken of as the strongest poetical force among our younger men. Yet the contrast between his work and that of Mr Watson is very great. The severe self-restraint of the latter is noticeably absent from the former. With much beauty of expression, lyrical charm, and affluence of imagery, Mr Davidson combines an Elizabethan forcefulness, and something also of an Elizabethan extravagance. For a poet he can no longer be counted young, yet

his faults are the faults of youth. He has imagination, fancy, a wide outlook, melody, and a keen sense of the beautiful; but intellectual force and the power of self-criticism can scarcely be reckoned among his gifts. Often he runs riot in 'wild and whirling words.' He would even seem to wish to startle and offend by the violence of his attacks on dearly cherished beliefs.

In the volume of *Ballads and Songs* already referred to, he expresses a wish that *A Ballad of Heaven*, and *A Ballad of Hell*, should be read along with *A Ballad of the Making of a Poet* and *A Ballad of the Exodus from Houndsditch*, from which we may gather that he himself attaches especial importance to this sequence of pieces, and that it is from them we are to obtain his ripest thoughts respecting life and that which lies beyond. And if we add to them *A Ballad of a Nun*, we shall have under review the most noteworthy of Mr Davidson's whole contributions to poetical literature up to the present time. Now making every allowance for occasional felicities both of conception and of language, and for a general manifestation of poetical faculty of an unusual quality, it must be confessed that the addition which these poems make towards a philosophy of life is miserably small. With all their poetical charm, they are destitute of true dignity and any high sense of moral beauty. Thus they seldom thrill or soften the reader, perhaps because they so often rouse within him an angry feeling of protest and opposition. The windy

egotisms of such a piece as *A Ballad on the Making of a Poet*, notwithstanding its many fine passages, if we are to take them as in any degree expressing the writer himself, only serve to reveal the weaknesses and vagaries of the so-called artistic temperament. Having cast off all hereditary and parent-sanctioned creeds, he plumes himself on being a man apart :—

> 'Set by to overhear
> The inner harmony, the very tune
> Of Nature's heart ; to be a thoroughfare
> For all the pageantry of Time ; to catch
> The mutterings of the Spirit of the Hour
> And make them known ; and of the lowliest
> To be the minister, and therefore reign
> Prince of the powers of the air, lord of the world
> And master of the sea. Within my heart
> I'll gather all the universe, and sing
> As sweetly as the spheres, and I shall be
> The first of men to understand himself.'

These poems are never quite clear in their meaning, nor do they convince. *The Ballad of Heaven* pictures an inspired musician finishing his score just when wife and child have died from want of food, and unable to survive them, being ushered into heaven to the notes of his own 'brave andante' and 'thundering scherzo.'

> 'But God said "Even so ;
> Nothing is lost that's wrought with tears ;
> The music that you made below
> Is now the music of the spheres."'

The poetical virtues of courage, hope, and love alone

seem to have place in this verse, and even when the reader feels most the power that underlies it, he is most conscious how little it appeals to his sympathies.

Mr Davidson was born in 1857 at Barrhead, Renfrewshire. His father was an Evangelical Union minister, and in the early days of the poet was for a time colleague to Dr James Morrison, in Glasgow. At fifteen the future poet became a pupil teacher at Greenock, thus coming under the influence of local scenery which doubtless suggested the descriptions in *The Making of a Poet*. He taught in various schools in Scotland until 1889, when he came to London to pursue a literary career. His life during the next four years was one of hardship. He certainly did not eat the bread of idleness, for since that time he has produced more than a dozen separate volumes. His first real success was won with *Fleet Street Eclogues*, published in 1893. It was followed by *A Random Itinerary*, partly in prose and partly in verse, and by the still more remarkable *Ballads and Songs* in 1894. Since then there have appeared from his pen a second series of *Fleet Street Eclogues* and *New Ballads* (1896).

Technical perfection is not characteristic of this writer. Here, however, undoubtedly is the soul of the true poet. Any number of passages—passages rather than whole poems—might be cited in proof of this. Many see in Mr Davidson's *Ballad of a Nun* his strongest claim to a true poetic inspiration. And yet in the conception of this poem there is something

repugnant and false to human nature. We have only to compare Adelaide Ann Proctor's *Legend of Provence* with this, Mr Davidson's version of it, to see how much his work has gained in power, and at the same time lost in moral elevation.

In his descriptions of Nature, as in his four poems on the Seasons, he is fresh and original. The following vigorous stanzas are from his poem on *Spring*:—

'Certain, it is not wholly wrong
To hope that yet the skies may ring
With the due praises that belong
To April over all the Spring:
If one could only make a song
The birds would wish to sing.

'The beggar starts his pilgrimage;
And kings their tassel-gentles fly;
The labourer earns a long day's wage;
The knight, a star of errantry,
With some lost princess for a page
Strays about Arcady.

'Now fetching water in the dusk
The maidens linger by the wells;
The ploughmen cast their homespun husk,
And, while old Tuck his chaplet tells,
Themselves in spangled fustian busk,
And garters girt with bells.

'Maid Marian's kirtle, somewhat old,
A welt of red must now enhance;
Oho! ho ho! in silk and gold
The gallant hobby horse will prance;
Sing hey, for Robin Hood the bold;
Heigh ho, the morris-dance!

'Oh foolish fancy, feebly strong!
To England shall we ever bring
The old mirth back? Yes, yes; nor long
It shall be till that greater Spring;
And some one yet may make a song
The birds would like to sing.'

Reaching, however, a higher standard, are the following extremely poetical lines taken from *A Ballad of a Nun*:—

'High on a hill the convent hung,
Across a duchy looking down,
Where everlasting mountains flung
Their shadows over tower and town.

'The jewels of their lofty snows
In constellations flashed at night;
Above their crests the moon arose;
The deep earth shuddered with delight.

'Long ere she left her cloudy bed,
Still dreaming in the orient land,
On many a mountain's happy head
Dawn lightly laid her rosy hand.

'The adventurous sun took Heaven by storm;
Clouds scattered largesses of rain;
The sounding cities, rich and warm,
Smouldered and glittered in the plain.

'Sometimes it was a wandering wind,
Sometimes the fragrance of the pine,
Sometimes the thought how others sinned,
That turned her sweet blood into wine.'

Francis Thompson. When Francis Thompson published his *Poems* in 1893, he seemed to justify to many the hope that one of the greater singers

had struck his lyre amongst us. The large conception and the wide horizon, the intellectual force and sublimity of imagination were all apparently found here. Faults of occasional harshness and over-luxuriance, faults, too, of obscurity and pedantry in the use and coinage of words, were obvious. But all could be forgiven for the sake of the thrill that came to the reader as he accompanied the poet in his audacious yet reverent flights. Here were none of the trivialities of modern poetry. Almost every line was weighted with its thought, and made luminous by the flashes of a fine imagination. Moreover, the morbid despair and suspense of latter-day poetry were happily absent. The soul that here uttered itself had been crushed, but had risen; had been in the depths, but was now on the heights, with the atmosphere of faith and hope around it, and over all the arching bow of divine mercy and love. It was a rare and elevating pleasure that such poetry could give, but it was for those only who were capable of understanding and appreciating it.

The *Poems* are arranged in three divisions. *Love in Dian's Lap*, *Miscellaneous Poems*, and *Poems on Children*. The love which the first set treats of is a love without a taint of voluptuousness, a love that purifies and elevates, a love that regards woman as a gift from Heaven to purge man from his grossness, and therefore has no eye for her outward beauty, so directly and intensely does it gaze at the pure spirit within.

'How should I gauge what beauty is her dole
Who cannot see her countenance for her soul;
As birds see not the casement for the sky?
I know not of her body till I find
My flight debarred the heaven of her mind.'

In the fine *Poems on Children* there is the same thought—that a child, like a true woman, is a gift from heaven, the better part of both being native there. There is a dainty simplicity in *Daisy*, a bold but delicate fancifulness in *The Making of Viola*, and notwithstanding its air of pedantry, all the poet's great love and reverence for childhood in *To my Godchild*. It is, however, to the *Miscellaneous Poems* that most readers will turn for the most convincing proofs of this author's genius. Of these pieces *A Corymbus for Autumn* and *The Hound of Heaven* may be selected as showing to what an extraordinary height of sustained power this poet can rise. The latter, within its small compass, may be said to be one of the most richly imaginative poems of recent times. It describes a human soul pursued and finally captured by the Divine Love. The conception is noble, and is worked out with a profusion of imagery and a glow of spiritual passion that thrill the reader under a consciousness of unwonted exaltation. We seem in these verses to see a poet who can tread with something of Miltonic firmness the dim regions of the sublime. The poem opens thus:—

'I fled him down the nights, and down the days;
I fled him down the arches of the years;

I fled him down the labyrinthine ways
Of my own mind; and in the mist of tears
I hid from Him, and under running laughter.
Up vistaed hopes I sped;
And shot precipitated
Adown Titanic glooms of chasmèd fears,
From those strong feet that followed, followed after.
But with unhurrying chase,
And unperturbèd pace,
Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,
They beat—and a Voice beat
More instant than the Feet—
"All things betray thee, who betrayest Me."

. . . . . .

'Across the margent of the world I fled,
And troubled the gold gateways of the stars,
Smiting for shelter on their changèd bars;
Fretted to dulcet jars
And silvern chatter the pale ports o' the moon.
I said to dawn: Be sudden—to eve: Be soon;
With thy young skiey blossoms heap me over
From this tremendous Lover!
Float thy vague veil about me, lest He see!

. . . . . .

'To all swift things for swiftness did I sue;
Clung to the whistling mane of every wind.
But whether they swept, smoothly fleet,
The long savannahs of the blue;
Or whether, Thunder-driven,
They clanged His chariot 'thwart a heaven,
Plashy with flying lightnings round the spurn o'
their feet:—
Fear wist not to evade as Love wist to pursue.'

But such poetry may seem too remote from the lighter spirit of the times to have even the chance of popularity. This may in part be due to the strain of Catholic devotion that runs all through it, but it is

also due in some measure to its intellectual force, and its air of high and sacred imagination. None the less it gives a welcome example of the stately, deep-thoughted, earnest work of a by-past poetical time, when grand thoughts took shape in grand and noble language.

The latest volumes of this writer, *Sister Songs* 1895, and *New Poems* 1897, it is to be feared, have not added to his reputation. The impression seems to grow that he is wilfully obscure and pedantic. The strain he puts upon the reader is excessive; and not even the seventeenth century in which he finds his models can outdo him in the eccentric coinage of words, and the aloofness of his thoughts.

Sir Lewis Morris (1835). Although the poems of this writer, judging by his numerous editions, have perhaps more largely than those of any other English poet now living secured acceptance with the general public, he is not much in favour with his literary brethren. His production has been large in amount and varied in form: and many of his poems present that surface interest in easily understood narrative that appeals so strongly to the mere lay reader. Experts, however, object that he takes himself too seriously, that he is pretentious and shallow, that he is not only wanting in originality, but too manifestly imitative of other writers, especially Tennyson, that his thought when original seldom rises above commonplace, and that just as seldom does it show any

distinction of vivifying and illuminating imagination; that, in fact, his mechanical facility is on a par with his unbounded self-confidence, and that his verse is marked by a plausible rhetoric rather than by any genuine gift of song. And although the judgment thus expressed may err on the side of harshness, and may even reflect to some extent the jealousies of other bards who have themselves been less fortunate in their appeals to the public, it must be confessed that there is some ground for their adverse judgment.

Had the volume of this poet's work been less, its value would probably have been greater. And yet the very popularity of these poems would seem to indicate that they have not inadequately fulfilled their mission. For if they do not satisfy the highest taste, they do undoubtedly give pleasure to many whose tastes in poetry are of a simple and rudimentary kind. Evidently the middle-class intelligence finds his poetical treatment of the great thoughts of the age in his *Songs of Two Worlds*, as well as his presentation of the old Greek myths in *The Epic of Hades*, both pleasing and instructive. This might be considered enough to justify a genuine reputation. And it is only when the claim is advanced on his behalf of being a great and inspired singer, that hostile criticism is likely to assert itself.

Besides the collections of poems just referred to, he has written *Gwen*, *The Ode of Life*, *Songs Unsung*, and *Songs of Britain*, all of which with the three series of *Songs of Two Worlds*, and *The Epic of Hades*

were in 1890 published in one compact and cheap volume. His later productions are *A Vision of Saints* (1890), *Songs without Notes* (1894), and *Idylls and Lyrics* (1896).

This Welsh poet was born in Carmarthen in 1835. After a distinguished course at Oxford, he was in 1861 called to the bar, which however he speedily abandoned for literature. The honour of knighthood came to him in 1895.

The influence of this poet on the moral side has undoubtedly been good. He shows little sympathy with the sadness and diseased sentimentality of so much of the poetry of our younger men. In his view of life there is good reason for cheerfulness and hope; and no one can charge him with doing anything to undermine religious faith and reverence. On the whole *The Epic of Hades* may be regarded as his greatest contribution to modern poetry, and of the poems composing that work *Marsyas* will probably be generally regarded as the best.

Alfred Austin (1835). On New Year's Day 1896, after an interval of three years during which the office had remained in abeyance, Mr Alfred Austin was appointed Poet-Laureate in succession to Lord Tennyson. The appointment was a surprise to the majority of British people, who were not only ignorant of the new Laureate's works, but had scarcely even heard his name. Algernon Swinburne and William Morris, to say nothing of younger men like William

Watson, were still living, and to any one of these it was thought the laurel might have fallen with better grace. No doubt there were reasons in the republicanism of Swinburne and the earnest Socialistic propaganda of Morris why they at least should be debarred from what is essentially a court function. But it is clear that even the most ardent admirers of Mr Austin cannot contend that his appointment means just what the Laureateship signified in the case of Wordsworth and Tennyson. It is only fair, however, to say that if the selection of Alfred Austin proceeded on purely party lines, and was not the best possible, no other choice that could have been made would have been altogether free from objection. At least the appointment has not been won without a long and honourable record of thirty-five years of literary service as poet, critic, and journalist; and no one can say that the new Laureate has ever used his powers for base or ignoble purposes. Moreover in his warm attachment to the throne, his reverence for British institutions, and his glowing patriotism are to be seen some at least of the qualities of a national poet, and the guarantee that the honour of his country will be safe in his hands.

Mr Austin was born of Catholic parents at Headingley, near Leeds, in 1835. After an education obtained at Stonyhurst and St Mary's College, Oscott, he graduated at London University in 1853. In compliance with the wishes of his parents he now devoted himself to the study of the law, and was called to the

bar in 1857. That his mind, however, was set on other things, may be judged by the fact that in his eighteenth year he published anonymously his first work, a poem entitled *Randolph*, followed soon after by a novel. On his father's death in 1861, he finally abandoned the law, and the same year witnessed the publication of *The Season: a Satire*, the first work to which he had put his name. It showed an abundance of cleverness and vigour, with not a little audacity and self-assertiveness. It was severely handled by many of the critics, although the promise of the youthful writer was freely enough acknowledged. During the same year he produced a reply to his critics in *My Satire and its Censors*, and in this as in *The Season* he fell foul of certain established literary reputations including those of Owen Meredith, Hepworth Dixon, Mrs Browning and Charles Dickens, while laying the lash, not without pungency and self-satisfaction on society manners and 'diseases,' as seen in London. When, therefore, he himself appeared as a writer of serious poetry in 1862 with his *Human Tragedy*, expectation ran high as to his possible achievements. That his own opinion of this work is not a low one, may be judged from the fact that he has on several occasions since its first publication presented it in revised forms to the public. Nevertheless, the result was disappointing; for neither the *Human Tragedy*, nor any of the important works that followed—*Savonarola* (1881), *At the Convent Gate* (1885), *Prince Lucifer* (1887), ambitious though they

were, gave proof of a genuine inspiration. In his bold and clever essays on *The Poetry of the Period* (1870), he passes judgment upon his contemporaries with a refreshing vigour and frankness, and does not hesitate to criticise unfavourably even such masters as Tennyson and Browning, Swinburne and Morris. It seems strange, considering where he now stands and whom he has succeeded, to think that in these criticisms he will scarcely allow to the fine singer of *In Memoriam* the highest place even in the third rank of English poets.

Mr Austin's shorter lyrics represent him more favourably than these longer and more ambitious performances. They have finish and smoothness. They are not mere echoes of other men's thoughts and cadences. Nevertheless they are wanting in power of thought and intensity of passion, and never thrill the reader by rising to any great height of noble imagination. There is noticeable, however, in all Mr Austin's work, whether in poetry or prose, a lucid directness and intelligence. The ardent lover of nature is revealed in every line, not Tennyson himself observing more accurately, or voicing with truer insight her ever-varying moods. He is a Briton of the Britons, ready at any moment, in vindication of crown or country, to burst forth into strains of Tyrtæan fire and energy.

Besides the works already mentioned, he has written in verse *The Golden Age: a Satire* (1871), *Interludes* (1872), *Soliloquies in Song* (1882), *Lyrical Poems* (1891), *Fortunatus the Pessimist* (1892), *England's Darling*

(1896), and *The Conversion of Winckelmann* (1897). In prose he is the author of five novels, and many essays and reviews contributed to the serial press, his work of this kind being marked by much brilliancy, incisiveness, and competency of knowledge. In his earlier career he did much leader-writing for the *Daily News* and the *Standard* newspapers, and acted as special correspondent for the latter at the head-quarters of the German Emperor in the Franco-German War. He is said to have been the first Englishman that entered Paris after the siege. In 1853 in conjunction with Mr W. J. Courthope, who is now Professor of Poetry at Oxford, and who has recently (1895) published the first volume of a monumental *History of English Poetry*, Mr Austin founded the *National Review*, of which he was editor till 1893. Among his latest contributions to English literature are a delightful piece of poetical prose, full of idyllic charm, entitled, *The Garden that I Love* (1894), and its equally attractive sequel, *In Veronica's Garden* (1895).

The following verses are from *A Night in June*, one of Mr Austin's finest lyrics.

'Lady! in this night of June,
Fair, like thee, and holy,
Art thou gazing at the moon
That is rising slowly?
I am gazing on her now:
Something tells me, so art thou.

Night hath been when thou and I
Side by side were sitting,
Watching o'er the moonlit sky
Fleecy cloudlets flitting.

Close our hands were linkèd then;
When will they be linked again?

'What to me the starlight still,
Or the moonbeams' splendour,
If I do not feel the thrill
Of thy fingers slender?
Summer nights in vain are clear,
If thy footstep be not near.

'If thou camest, rose on rose
From its sleep would waken;
From each flower and leaf that blows
Spices would be shaken;
Floating down from star and tree,
Dreamy perfumes welcome thee.

. . . . . .

'I would give thee all I own,
All thou hast would borrow,
I from thee would keep alone
Fear and doubt and sorrow.
All of tender that is mine,
Should most tenderly be thine.

'Moonlight! into other skies,
I beseech thee wander.
Cruel thus to mock mine eyes,
Idle thus to squander
Love's own light on this dark spot;—
For my lady cometh not!'

Norman Gale (1862.)—There is a charming freshness and originality about the *Country Muse* (1892) and *Orchard Songs* (1893) of Mr Norman Gale. They breathe the very atmosphere of field and woodland. In every rustic scene and incident the poet finds a summons to joy and the sunshine of the heart, and he is not slow to acknowledge his obligations to

the great Father who has made the country so sweet and fair. It is even a part of the charm of such poems that they touch no deep chords of emotion, deal with no dark problems of life and character. As their names imply they are simple pastorals, thrilling all through with the ecstasy of thrush and blackbird, lark and nightingale, and breathing in every line the scent of clover and of woodland. Each scene is fitted with its rustic maiden, Cicely or Clarinda, fresh as the dew, and modest as the violet, tripping across the meadow to her morning labours among the kine, or mayhap hieing shyly with her companions to a woodland bath in the shaded pool. For with this poet the beauties of nature are never divorced from the human loves that cling to them and render them still more lovely. Moreover the rustic pipe on which Mr Gale plays thus sweetly is entirely his own. This fact and a certain easy command of metrical form justify the expectation that we have still much to receive from this poet's hand.

His other works are *A June Romance*, *Cricket Songs*, *Songs for Little People*, and a second series of *The Country Muse* (1895). Mr Gale was born at Kew, Surrey, in 1862. He is still, therefore, in the youth of his powers. The following lines are taken from *A Cotswold Village* :

> 'When Time is weary of my company
> Here let me rest.
> If I should end within four walls
> With bricks around,
> Buy me no smoky patch of city ground,
> But bring me to these acres of repose

Whose natural consecration is most sure,
That I may sleep beneath a country rose
And where the dew is pure;
For in this valley God appeared to me,
And where my soul is let my body be.

'What time the father walked this earth
He trod, I know, these Cotswold slopes;
With silence and with sound
He clothed each mound;
The shadow of His robe goes over them,
The bounties of His wisdom cover them
And whoso cometh here
To tread this sod—
He sees the neighbour neighbourly,
And learning all Long Compton's loveliness
The better learns his God."

Other Poets.—England is in the closing years of the nineteenth century as it was at the close of the sixteenth—a nest of singing birds. The air seems alive with the sweet variety of their notes, and if no great distinction has as yet been won by the singers, at least we may be sure that the continuity of British song is not likely to be broken. Mention has still to be made of other poets of the period, some at least of whom may seem to deserve fuller notice than can here be given them.

Coventry Patmore (1823-1897), the Laureate of Home and the Domestic Affections, wrote *The Angel in the House*, *The Unknown Eros*, and *Miscellaneous Poems*, but notwithstanding many exquisite passages, failed to reach the highest distinction. **George Macdonald (1824)**, better known as a novelist, began his literary career in the dramatic poem, *Within*

and Without, and followed it up with *Poems*, *The Hidden Life*, *The Disciple*, *and The Gifts of the Child Christ*, all of them marked by an elusive and mystical fancy, but showing so much lyrical delicacy and sweetness as to make it matter of regret that poetry and he should have parted company so soon. **Gerald Massey (1828)**, himself sprung from the people, has strongly voiced the wants of the people, and although he has risen to no great height of lyrical inspiration, he has written both sweetly and sympathetically of fireside incidents and emotions; and, in a number of national pieces, has shown an unwonted fire and energy of patriotic feeling. His *Sir Richard Grenville's Last Fight* is a spirited and powerful ballad — Tennyson's subsequent treatment of the same theme notwithstanding. All his best pieces are to be found in *My Lyrical Life* (1890). **George Meredith (1828)**, now so distinguished as a novelist, made his first bid for fame in a small volume of *Poems* published forty-four years ago. This was followed in the intervals of his prose fictions by other exercises in verse—*Modern Love* in 1862, and *Poems and Lyrics of the Joy of Earth* in 1883. These seem to have brought him little profit and not much reputation, save with the select few to whom the subtle and eccentric qualities of this writer are as a whet to appetite.

Sir Edwin Arnold (1832), formerly Principal of the Government Sanscrit College at Poona, and now Editor of the *Daily Telegraph*, is best known by *The*

Light of Asia, in which he tells in poetical form the story of Siddârtha, the founder of Buddhism. In *The Light of the World* he essayed to do the same for the founder of Christianity, but with indifferent success.

Theodore Watts (1836), the friend and companion of Dante Rossetti and Swinburne, has shown a striking poetical faculty in many beautiful sonnets and lyrics. **Frederick W. H. Myers (1843)**, though better known as an able critic of our literature, has also taken his place among the poets in virtue of his *St Paul* (1865), *Poems* (1870), and *The Renewal of Youth* (1882). In all are noticeable a certain nobility of tone, and fluent grace of expression. If there is less of finish in *The Shorter Poems* of **Robert Bridges (1844)**, another poet of culture, there is a richer variety of poetical material, and a greater force and subtlety of thought. **William Ernest Henley** was born at Gloucester in 1849. In youth he suffered from bad health, and came to Edinburgh to place himself under the care of Sir Joseph, now Lord Lister. He was thus a patient in the old Edinburgh Infirmary for the space of twenty months. Two things besides his restoration to comparative health resulted. Robert Louis Stevenson found him out, saw much of him, and the two afterwards collaborated in a volume of plays, and became life-long friends. Another result of his enforced idleness was his first volume of *Poems* (1887), the best parts of which were inspired by hospital scenes and incidents. The vivid directness and realistic power of these at once attracted atten-

tion. A later volume, *The Song of the Sword and other Verses* (1892), confirmed the good impression. Mr Henley has since made considerable reputation as a critic of art and literature, and as Editor in succession of *London*, *The Magazine of Art*, and *The Scots*, afterwards *The National*, *Observer*, and is now engaged in editing the *New Review*.

In the same year 1849 was born **Edmund Gosse**, who is also well known as a prose critic, and as a capable and industrious scholar of English and other literatures. He began his career as a poet. Of his various volumes, the principal was *On Viol and Flute* (1873), a later edition of which (1890) contained all his earlier poems.

Want of space alone prevents the notice of many other poets of the period, especially of numerous women writers who have produced a highly respectable body of verse, without, however, in any case rising into the first rank.

CHAPTER VII

Essayists and Reviewers

THE Victorian Essay can scarcely be considered apart from that marvellous expansion of journalism that forms perhaps the most striking literary characteristic of the present reign. It is not marked by any one distinctive feature, but in excellence it is not unworthy of the great traditions of a literature that has given us such essayists as Bacon and Dryden, Addison and Steele, Johnson and Defoe, Hazlitt and Lamb. As in other departments of literature, so in the region of the *Belles Lettres*, the earlier Victorian period is also the greater. To the first half of the reign belong the names of such writers as Lockhart and Macaulay, Leigh Hunt and Carlyle, and to the excellence of their work in general literature, reference has already been made. But to this period also belong the names of De Quincey and Professor Wilson, Ruskin and Matthew Arnold, to say nothing of Sir Arthur Helps, the author of *Friends in Council*, and such illuminating critics as Walter Bagehot and George Brimley.

Thomas de Quincey (1785-1859). An atmosphere

of quaint originality hangs around the great Opium Eater. The interest we take in him is less due to his power of deep and subtle thought, his grand and impressive imagination, and his peculiarly sonorous and organ-like melody of style, all of which have made him an English classic, than to the unique and lovable personality of the man himself. No life of him, however meagre, can fail of interest.

Thomas de Quincey was born in Manchester in 1785. His father, a wealthy merchant in that city, died young, but left his family in comfortable circumstances. To Thomas probably the loss was more serious than to any of the other children. With his peculiarities of temperament, the judicious guidance and sympathy of a father so clever and cultured would have been invaluable. It is evident that an element of Spartan-like austerity was present in his mother's character, and that her children found it easier to admire her many chill graces and accomplishments than to love her. After his father's death, Thomas and his elder brother William received instruction from the Rev. Samuel Hall, a clergyman of Salford, and an intimate friend of their late father. At this time Thomas was a shy, sensitive, dreamy child, predisposed to melancholy, from which the stormy energy of his brother William did much to rouse him. In his twelfth year, Mrs de Quincey broke up her establishment at Greenheys, and removed to Bath. The Grammar School of this town was then under the headmastership of Mr Morgan, an accomplished scholar. Under

the inspiration of his influence young De Quincey made great progress in his classical studies, so that, although one of the younger boys, he was looked upon as the prodigy of the school. But this very success, it is said, was the cause of dissatisfaction to his mother, who disliking that her boy should be made the subject of public commendation, sent him to Wingfield, a private school in Wiltshire. Here he became a general favourite, and made good progress with his Greek studies. On leaving this school a year afterwards, he accompanied his young friend Lord Westport in a tour through Ireland. On concluding a round of visits in which he was thus engaged during the next four or five months, his guardians decided to send him to the Grammar School of Manchester for three years before proceeding to Oxford. This they did chiefly on economical grounds, in the hope that he would secure one of several exhibitions of the value of fifty pounds obtainable for a university course at Manchester. The arrangement was little to De Quincey's liking; he pled hard that he might rather be sent to the Grammar School at Bath. When in 1800 therefore he was actually placed in Manchester, the disappointment seems to have rankled in his mind, and combined with the irksomeness of restraint following upon so much irresponsible liberty, and perhaps also with some measure of ill-health, caused him after eighteen months to run away from the school. The causes for this step, whatever they were, did not seem sufficient to himself afterwards. His masters were

appreciative of his uncommon ability, his companions liked him, and as several of them were boys of quite exceptional talent and information, he had all the stimulus he required. We are left to conjecture that the eccentricity and impatience of restraint that were characteristic of him throughout life had begun to assert themselves. He found his way to Chester, where his mother was then residing. Naturally she had nothing but blame for the step that he had taken. Fortunately, however, for his wishes, his mother's brother, Colonel Thomas Penson, was then staying with her, and taking a less unfavourable view of the situation, recommended that the boy should receive a guinea a week, and be left free to wander where he chose. From July to November 1802, therefore, we find him engaged in a protracted pedestrian tour in North Wales, in which he meets strange people and has many curious adventures. Either growing tired of this vagabond life at last, or freakishly resenting the thin thread of restraint which his guinea a week imposed upon him, he took the curious step of burying himself in London, in the hope of being able to raise £200 on his expectations. He has put a thrilling and pathetic interest into the story of this part of his life. It is scarcely credible that a youth of seventeen, well connected and without vicious habits, should have been thus stranded in London, and completely lost for so many months to all knowledge of his friends. During the delay consequent upon negotiations with the money-lenders, he was reduced almost to starva-

tion, and became acquainted, innocently enough, with some strange associates. These he has described with great power, and in the case of the poor waif Ann, a kindly outcast of sixteen years, with a touching pathos.

At length he was discovered and sent home. After remaining in his mother's house for about a year, he went to Oxford in 1803. He was too erratic in his habits to be very successful as a student, and he ultimately left without a degree. He did, however, go up for his written examination, and so impressed were the examiners, that one of them, Dr Goodenough of Christ Church, told the Worcester College people that they had sent up the cleverest man he had ever encountered, and that, if he did as well in his *viva voce* as he had done on paper, he would carry all before him. He vanished however from Oxford the night before his *viva voce* was due. In illustration of the reserve which after the first he practised at Oxford, he mentions that he spoke only once to his tutor, and that what was said consisted 'of only three sentences, two of which fell to his share, one to mine.' He had brought with him to the University an unusual mastery of the Greek language; and while there he divided his time between the study of Greek philosophy, German, Hebrew, and the masterpieces of English literature.

In 1807 he had been introduced to Wordsworth and Coleridge, for both of whom he had the warmest admiration, and whose genius, as expressed in *The Lyrical Ballads*, he claimed to have been one of

the first to recognise. On leaving Oxford in 1808, he took up his abode in the cottage at Grasmere that had been occupied by Wordsworth, and this cottage he retained for the next twenty-seven years. By his residence at Grasmere he became enrolled in the band of brilliant geniuses who took so much of their inspiration from the scenery and associations of the Lakes. One evil habit he had, which was little in harmony with his beautiful surroundings. He is known everywhere throughout the world as the English Opium Eater. This pernicious habit had been growing upon him since 1804, his second year at Oxford, when, during a visit to London, he first tasted the drug. It was prescribed by a chemist for the relief of certain distressing symptoms, from which De Quincey appears to have suffered more or less throughout his life. Up to 1813 it was taken only occasionally, but after that year it became a part of his daily diet, the quantity steadily increasing, until in 1816 it reached the appalling total of 8000 drops of laudanum per day. In this year De Quincey was married to Margaret Simpson, the beautiful young daughter of a Westmoreland yeoman. In view of this event he made an effort to overcome his enemy, and so far succeeded that his daily quantity was reduced from 8000 to 80 drops. Sometime after marriage, however, he succumbed once more, and four years were spent in a kind of intellectual torpor. As the result, his affairs became seriously embarrassed, and

the sharp goad of necessity compelling him, he was again enabled, partially at least, to overcome the spells of the deadly drug. When in 1821 he published in the pages of the *London Magazine* his famous *Confessions of an English Opium Eater*, he was under the impression that he had finally triumphed. In this, however, he was mistaken, for he continued to use the drug, although in diminished quantity, till his death.

Up to 1825 his literary connection was chiefly with London, whither he often repaired from his retreat among the mountains. On such occasions he would have much pleasant intercourse with such agreeable companions as Charles Lamb, Thomas Hood, Sir T. Noon Talfourd, Charles Knight, and Allan Cunningham. After 1825 he wrote chiefly for Edinburgh, many of his best articles appearing in *Blackwood's Magazine*. Of these may be mentioned *Murder considered as one of the Fine Arts*, *The Mail Coach*, with *The Vision of Sudden Death*, *Suspiria de Profundis*; also *Toilette of a Hebrew Lady*, *Dr Parr and his Contemporaries*, *The Cæsars*, *The Esseness*, and *Coleridge and Opium Eating*.

In 1834 he began to write for *Tait's Magazine*, also published in Edinburgh. His connection with *Tait* lasted till 1846, and he appears to have contributed in all about fifty papers to its pages. De Quincey's earliest acquaintance with Edinburgh was through Professor Wilson. The latter, in consequence of the loss of his fortune, had been obliged to leave Elleray,

his beautiful home on Lake Windermere. He and De Quincey had had many long rambles and much pleasant intercourse together. It was natural, therefore, that when Wilson had settled in Edinburgh, De Quincey should pay him a visit in his new home. Wilson lived in the very heart of the intellectual life of the northern metropolis, and De Quincey seems to have had much pleasure in meeting Wilson's brilliant band of associates, of whom were such men as Lockhart, Sir William Hamilton, his brother. Captain Thomas Hamilton, the author of *Cyril Thornton*, Sir William Allan, and R. P. Gillies. This was in 1820.

From 1826 to 1830, various articles from De Quincey's pen appeared in *Blackwood*, in consequence of which it would seem he was to be found even more frequently in Edinburgh than at Grasmere. This was followed in the latter year by the removal of the family to Edinburgh, which henceforth till his death is the chief scene of his literary labours. The De Quincey family can be traced with difficulty through the various lodgings occupied by them in Edinburgh during the next ten years. The reason for such frequent changes does not appear, although from the fact that one of these lodgings was within the sanctuary of Holyrood, we may suppose that straitened circumstances had something to do with them. But there is a mysterious or evasive element in all the De Quincey history. Neither the man himself nor his life, profoundly interesting though he was to so many people, was fully known even to such intimates as

Wilson. They saw in him an enigma, whom no ordinary standards of life and character could possibly explain. After the death of Mrs de Quincey in 1837, a comfortable cottage was taken at Polton, near Lasswade, about seven miles from Edinburgh, where the children lived under the admirable care of the eldest daughter Margaret; De Quincey himself, except at intervals, living at 42 Lothian Street, or some other lodging in Edinburgh. Nothwithstanding the peculiarity of this arrangement, there is no doubt that he was a fond and considerate father, and that he was deeply loved and respected by his children. During these later years he had the best literary society that Edinburgh could afford, and amongst others became well acquainted with Mr and Mrs Carlyle. The habits of the recluse, however, were growing upon him, and many who would have been glad to catch a glimpse of the famous Opium Eater were disappointed. In his frequent changes of lodging he would sometimes vanish altogether from the view of his friends. Occasionally he would spend a year or more in Glasgow, partly to enjoy the conversation of his friends, Professors Nichol and Lushington, and partly to execute some literary work in which the Western City especially was interested. Many articles contributed to *Blackwood* and *Tait* fill up these years. A new connection began in 1850 when De Quincey called on Mr Hogg, the publisher of *Hogg's Weekly Instructor*, and offered his services as a contributor. Both in the *Instructor* and *Titan*, into which it afterwards merged, many articles from

the Opium Eater appeared. But what makes this connection chiefly interesting is the fact that it was Mr Hogg who suggested to De Quincey the publication of a collected edition of his works. Although from the unpunctual and erratic habits of the writer it seemed unlikely that such a work would ever be carried to a successful conclusion, it was actually completed in an edition of fourteen volumes, enlarged in a later edition to sixteen. These, with some further additions that have been gathered together since De Quincey's death, afford ample material for forming a judgment concerning him, although they by no means embrace all his writings. It is well known that in his frequent changes of lodging, he left many precious bundles of manuscript behind him. These he was often too nervously timid to reclaim, if indeed, as was most likely, he did not altogether forget them. Some were discovered, after much trouble, by his friends. Some were restored voluntarily by those with whom they had been left; others came to light only by accident. Many are doubtless irrecoverably lost.

It was natural that one who united in himself so fine a genius with so singular a personality should excite a special interest in his many friends. No doubt that interest was piqued into still greater activity by the very elusiveness to which reference has been made. Even to see him was no easy matter, and not unfrequently the best laid stratagems for this purpose failed of success. Nevertheless we

have the deeply interesting impressions of many men concerning him, including Carlyle, Thomas Hood, John Hill Burton, Charles Knight, Mr J. R. Findlay, Professor Masson, and others. They all agree in describing him as very short in stature, with a large head, an expansive forehead, and an extreme fragility of form. The apparent boyishness of his aspect disappeared when, on a closer inspection, the innumerable wrinkles that lined his face became visible. The face itself was highly intellectual, and spoke both of good birth and of good breeding. His peculiarities in dress appear to have struck every one. They were as far as possible from any known conventional standard, and suggested that he had hastily clothed himself in the first garments that came to hand. All, too, were impressed with the sweetness and melody of his voice, that suited so well his gentle, courteous, and refined manner. Those who were privileged with a deeper intimacy, and especially if they were permitted to enter with him the magic circle of the midnight hours, were never tired of recalling the singular richness and eloquence of his talk.

Thomas Hood says: 'When I have found him at home—quite at home—in the midst of a German ocean of literature in a storm, flooding all the floor, the tables, billows of books, tossing, tumbling, surging open, on such occasions I have willingly listened by the hour whilst the philosopher, standing with his eyes fixed on one side of the room, seemed to be less speaking than reading from a "handwriting on the

wall." Now and then he would diverge for a Scotch mile or two . . . but he always came back safely to the point where he had left, not lost the scent, and thence hunted his topic to the end. But look! we are in the small hours, and a change comes o'er the spirit of that "old familiar face." A faint hectic tint leaves the cheek, the eyes are a degree dimmer, and each is surrounded by a growing shadow—signs of the waning influence of that potent drug whose stupendous pleasures and pains have been so eloquently described by the English Opium Eater.'

'When he sat,' says Carlyle, 'you would have taken him by candlelight for the beautifulest little child—blue-eyed, sparkling face—had there not been a something, too, which said, "Eccovi,"—this child has been in hell.' R. P. Gillies, an intimate Edinburgh friend, says of him: 'His voice was extraordinary; it came as if from dreamland; but it was the most musical and impressive of voices.'

'Oh for one hour of De Quincey!' exclaims Charles Knight; 'better three hours—from nine till midnight—for a rapt listener to be "under the wand of a magician," spell-bound by his wonderful affluence of talk, such as that of the fairy whose lips dropped rubies and diamonds. Many a night have I, with my wife by my side, sat listening to the equable flow of his discourse, both of us utterly forgetting the usual regularity of our habits, and hearing the drowsy watchman's "past one o'clock" (for the old watchman then walked his round) before we parted.'

Mrs Gordon, daughter of Professor Wilson, says: 'The time when he (De Quincey) was most brilliant was generally towards the early morning hours; and then, more than once, my father arranged his supper-parties so that, sitting till three or four in the morning, he brought Mr de Quincey to that point at which in charm and power of conversation he was so truly wonderful. I remember,' she says, 'his coming to Gloucester Place (her father's residence) one stormy night. He remained hour after hour in the vain expectation that the waters would assuage and the hurly-burly cease. There was nothing for it but that our visitor should remain all night.' She adds that he remained for the greater part of a year. Referring to his extreme carefulness as to diet, she further says that 'the cook, who had an audience with him daily, received his instructions in silent awe, quite overpowered by his manner; for, had he been addressing a duchess, he could scarcely have spoken with more deference.'

John Hill Burton, the historian of Scotland, knew De Quincey well, and under the name of Thomas Papaverius has in *The Book-Hunter* given some racy though highly exaggerated sketches of his friend. Making all allowances for the manifest caricature, these sketches are as clever as they are interesting. 'No one,' he says, 'speaks of waiting dinner for him. He will come and depart of his own sweet will, neither burdened with punctualities, nor burdening others by exacting them. The festivities of the afternoon are

far on when a commotion is heard in the hall, as if some dog or other stray animal had forced its way in. The instinct of a friendly guest tells him of the arrival —he opens the door and fetches in the little stranger. What can it be? A street boy of some sort? His costume, in fact, is a boy's duffle great-coat, very threadbare, with a hole in it, and buttoned tight to the chin, where it meets the fragments of a parti-coloured belcher handkerchief; on his feet are list-shoes, covered with snow—for it is a stormy winter's night; and the trousers—someone suggests that they are inner linen garments blackened with writing-ink, but that Papaverius never would have been at the trouble so to disguise them.

'What can be the theory of such a costume? The simplest thing in the world—it consisted of the fragments of apparel nearest at hand . . . His lips are speedily opened by some casual remark, and presently the flood of talk passes forth from them—free, clear, and continuous—never rising into declamation—never losing a certain mellow earnestness, and all consisting of sentences as exquisitely jointed together as if they were destined to challenge the criticism of the remotest posterity. . . Shall I try another sketch of him, when, travel-stained and footsore, he glided in on us one night like a shadow, the child by the fire gazing on him with round eyes of astonishment, and suggesting that he should get a penny and go home. . . . How far he had wandered since he had last refreshed himself, or even whether he had eaten food

that day, were matters on which there was no getting articulate utterance from him. Though his costume was muddy, however, and his communications about the material wants of life very hazy, the ideas which he had stored up during his wandering poured themselves forth as clear and sparkling, both in logic and language, as the purest fountain that springs from a Highland rock. How that wearied, worn, little body was to be refreshed was a difficult problem ; soft food disagreed with him—the hard he could not eat. Suggestions pointed at length to the solution of that vegetable unguent to which he had given a sort of lustre, and it might be supposed that there were some fifty cases of acute toothache to be treated in the house that night. How many drops? Drops! nonsense, if the wine-glasses of the establishment were not beyond the ordinary normal size, there was no risk—and so the weary is at rest for a time. . . Those who knew him a little might call him a loose man in money matters ; those who knew him closer laughed at the idea of coupling any notion of pecuniary or other like responsibility with his nature. You might as well attack the character of the nightingale, which may have nipped up your five-pound note and torn it into shreds to serve as nest-building material. Only immediate craving necessities could ever extract from him an acknowledgment of the common vulgar agencies by which men subsist in civilised society ; and only while the necessity lasted did the acknowledgment exist. Take just one example, which will render this

clearer than any generalities. He arrives very late at a friend's door, and on gaining admission—a process in which he often endured impediments—he represents, with his usual silver voice and measured rhetoric, the absolute necessity of his being then and there invested with a sum of money in the current coin of the realm—the amount limited, from the nature of his necessities, which he very freely states, to seven shillings and sixpence. Discovering, or fancying he discovers, signs that his eloquence is likely to be unproductive, he is fortunately reminded that, should there be any difficulty in connection with security for the repayment of the loan, he is at that moment in possession of a document, which he is prepared to deposit with the lender—a document calculated, he cannot doubt, to remove any feeling of anxiety which the most prudent person could experience in the circumstances. After a rummage in his pockets, which develops miscellaneous and varied, but as yet by no means valuable, possessions, he at last comes to the object of his search, a crumpled bit of paper, and spreads it out—a fifty-pound bank-note!'

Notwithstanding his extreme fragility of form, De Quincey lived to the ripe age of seventy-four. He had barely completed the last volume of the collected edition of his works when the natural decay of old age set in. On the 8th of December 1859, he died at his lodgings in Lothian Street, Edinburgh. Here in his last moments he had all that the loving care and attention of his daughters could give him. He sleeps

beside his wife and several of his children in a corner of St Cuthbert's Churchyard, under the shadow of the grey, old Scottish fortress.

De Quincey was a man of subtle, penetrating intellect, of an unusually wide range and copiousness of ideas, of a powerful and impressive imagination, and of a wonderful command of stately, appropriate, and melodiously balanced speech. The pomp of style, the grand roll, the majestic sweep of the great prose writers of a former period, such as Milton and Sir Thomas Browne, are to be heard once more in De Quincey. He had a life-long passion for classical music, and for him one of the chief pleasures of a visit to London was to be found in the Opera. Something reminiscent of this may be traced in what may be called the rich orchestration and splendid choral effects of his style.

He is a most digressive writer. It is never possible to predict at the beginning of a paper into what bye-paths he will be led before its close. Curious and interesting though many of these digressions are in themselves, they sorely exercise, and sometimes even irritate, the mind of the reader by their long-winded irrelevancies. Of this the well-known papers on Sir William Hamilton are perhaps the most flagrant examples.

His many descriptive sketches show a keen observation, but it is an observation directed to the people he comes in contact with, rather than to the ordinary forms of material nature. The great movements and

stormy agitations of the elements powerfully attract his imagination, and are made to play an important part in his writings. But the familiar every-day nature of Wordsworth with its simple scenery of hill and dale, of waving daffodils and growing primroses, does not attract him. On the other hand, he shows extraordinary acuteness in reading the signs of the human countenance; and will, under their guidance, follow the most complicated trains of thought, feeling, and motive of which they are the reflection, through all their subtlest labyrinths. In the sphere of intellectual analysis, De Quincey is an undoubted master; in that of exposition he is no less distinguished. Notwithstanding his learning, his many involved sentences, his diffuseness, and his frequent employment of uncommon and technical terms, he is on the whole simple and clear. He is besides one of the most careful of writers. *Murder considered as one of the Fine Arts* is the best example of his humour; but there are few of his pieces in which we do not find an air of comic pleasantry,—sometimes mischievously impish, and often not altogether seasonable. Pathos, too, of a true and touching kind is to be found, especially in the *Confessions* and *Autobiographical Sketches*.

De Quincey's genius is to be seen at its best in the papers thus grouped together,—that is in those which are most personal to himself. First must be placed *The Confessions of an English Opium Eater*, and its sequel of Prose Phantasies, including the remarkable

Suspiria de Profundis (Sighs from the Depths), and *The English Mail-Coach*. The swift moving panoramas, the gorgeous phantasmagoria, and, as he calls it, 'the heart-shattering music' of dreams, are in them all. In these his language is most elaborated, and assumes an oriental splendour in the richness and magnificence of its ornament. Fault indeed has been found with the style of De Quincey, chiefly on the ground of this excessive luxuriance and splendour of adornment.

Next in importance to these are the *Autobiographical Sketches*, in which he presents to us not only his own highly interesting personality, but also such intimates as Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Wilson, whose characters he read with a piercing insight, so that many have not been able to exonerate him from the charge of a spiteful maliciousness. In the attempt, however, to form a correct estimate of these men, it is not safe to overlook what De Quincey has written concerning them. In connection with his biographical work, mention may be made of his sketches of Shakespeare and Pope, and, in another vein, of Dr Parr and Walking Stewart.

De Quincey had the true historic sense, and seems at various times to have been moved to write some great work in history. Probably, however, the long-continued drudgery of labour at one subject was too alien from his ingrained habits and methods of working to permit of this. At all events we have in this department only certain papers, often acute, striking, and

brilliant from their background of historic imagination, such as *The Cæsars*, *The Revolt of the Tartars*, and *Joan of Arc*, to show his capabilities in this direction.

There are others which it is less easy to classify, such as the suggestive papers on the *Knocking in Macbeth*, and *Judas Iscariot*. His more elaborate treatises on *Rhetoric*, *Style*, and *Language*, have a distinct value as coming from one who not only had an intimate technical knowledge of these subjects, but was himself one of the great masters of style; while even such authorities as John Stuart Mill, treated with much deference his opinions on the vexed questions of Political Economy.

Until his thirty-sixth year, De Quincey had written nothing; but all these years, aided by a singularly retentive memory, he had been absorbing material from the best literatures of ancient and modern times. He claims for himself that his life throughout had been that of a philosopher, and that he had done little else at any period of it than read and think. No one, indeed, can fail to be struck with the multifariousness of his equipment for the business of literature. There seemed to be no subject on which he had not a competency of knowledge, and which he could not make interesting with an array of curious and recondite learning. Pedantry, however, is not one of his faults. He has a lightness of touch that enables his style to move easily under whatever burden of learning it is called upon to carry.

It is difficult to classify writings that cover so wide

and diversified a field. They are mostly in the essay form, and with the exception of *The Logic of Political Economy* and *Klosterheim*, were all of them contributions to the serial literature of the day.

John Wilson (1785-1854), De Quincey's friend, and the famous Christopher North of *Blackwood's Magazine*, had raised considerable expectation as a poet in *The Isle of Palms* (1812) and *The City of the Plague* (1816), and also as a prose writer in his stories, *The Lights and Shadows of Scottish Life* (1822), *The Trials of Margaret Lyndsay* (1823), and *The Foresters* (1824); but it is to his writings in the essay and dialogue forms that we must look for the finest fruits of his genius. On the whole his work has disappointed expectation. Already a partial oblivion has overtaken both his verse and his fiction, and he will probably live, if at all, in the blended poetry, philosophy, and humour of the *Noctes*, and especially in their unique creation of the *Shepherd*.

John Wilson was born at Paisley in 1785. His father, a wealthy manufacturer of that town, gave his son the opportunity of acquiring a good private education. After four years spent at the University of Glasgow, Wilson, in 1803, entered Magdalen College, Oxford. Here he greatly distinguished himself, not only by his brilliant intellectual gifts, but also by his wonderful powers as an athlete, some of the feats recorded of him in this latter character being scarcely even credible.

In 1806 he won the Newdigate prize for poetry;

and in 1810 he took his degree of M.A. In the same year he was happily married to Miss Jane Penny of Liverpool, a lady of great personal attractions and of genuine worth. Some time before, his father having left him a considerable fortune, he had purchased the estate of Elleray, overlooking Lake Windermere. Here he found an ideal home, not the least of the attractions of which was the near neighbourhood of De Quincey, and the Lakist poets, Wordsworth, Southey, and Coleridge, whom he greatly admired. Their influence is to be seen in *The Isle of Palms* and *The City of the Plague*, which, notwithstanding their sweetness and tenderness, fail to reveal the full force of the writer's genius.

On the loss of much of his fortune through the incapacity or the negligence of a relative acting as his agent, Wilson broke up his home at Elleray and came to Edinburgh. In 1815 he was called to the Scottish Bar, but was far from being burdened with briefs. For him, therefore, as well as for J. G. Lockhart, the launching of *Maga* in 1817 was an auspicious event, for most of his literary work from that time onwards was given to its pages. Wilson was never the editor, Mr Blackwood himself retaining the control; but Wilson's was the predominant spirit, as his articles were also for thirty years the most brilliant feature of the Magazine. In the earlier days, much of this work was somewhat of a scandal, and gave great offence by its personalities, and also sometimes by its seeming irreverence. But it had the merit of freshness, origin-

ality, and an abundance of good humour and animal spirits. The clever irrepressible boyishness of the writers had a certain charm for many readers, and the success of the Magazine was secured. Wilson's own work in connection with it must have been enormous. Some of the numbers are said to have contained as many as three and four articles from his pen. These occupations, however, did not prevent him in 1820 from becoming a candidate for the Chair of Moral Philosophy in the University of Edinburgh, rendered vacant by the death of Dr Thomas Brown, to which, notwithstanding the formidable competitorship of Sir William Hamilton, he was elected by a majority of votes of the Town Council, in whose hands the election then lay.

Wilson now flung himself with characteristic ardour and energy into the business of the Chair, the duties of which he continued to discharge for the next thirty years. Fears had been expressed as to his fitness for this task, but it is unquestioned that by his powerful eloquence and the inspiration of his striking personality, he made his dingy class-room the intellectual birthplace of many an ardent young man, who thenceforward found it unforgettable in all his after history. Wilson's various tales already referred to appeared in the years following this appointment. In their excess of pathos and of sentiment, they give an impression of effeminacy that is much at variance with one's conception of the rough, almost heroical manliness of their author. His critical papers were not, on

the whole, of permanent value, and were often marred by a too great luxuriance of style. His lively articles dealing with his own tastes as a sportsman are fuller of interest. But undoubtedly his best writing, and also his most beautiful and suggestive thought are to be found scattered up and down the *Noctes Ambrosianæ*. The *Noctes* are built upon certain imaginary convivial meetings, the scene of which is Ambrose's Tavern in Edinburgh, the characters being North himself, Timothy Tickler, James Hogg the 'Shepherd,' and occasionally De Quincey. Discounting much that is outrageously farcical, and much more that concerns matters now gone beyond the range of the reader's interest, there still remains in these papers much that can be read with interest and amusement. Sir John Skelton (Shirley), who has just passed away, and who was himself an accomplished literary man, has given us the cream of the *Noctes* in an interesting, mirth-provoking volume.

Professor Wilson died on April 3rd, 1854.

John Ruskin (1819), the most eloquent of art critics, and one of the greatest masters of ornate English style, has also had his associations with the English Lakes. He was born in London in 1819, but was by descent mainly Scotch. His father, after completing his education at the High School of Edinburgh, entered a business house in London, and there showed such excellent qualities that he was soon afterwards invited to become the managing partner of

a firm of wine merchants in that city. The firm prospered, and the home therefore to which, after a nine years' probation, he brought his Scotch cousin and bride, Margaret Cox, was one of comfort and even wealth. John Ruskin was the only child of this marriage, and from his earliest years was surrounded by all the advantages that plenty and luxury can bestow.

In many respects he was fortunate in his parents. His father had both literary and artistic tastes, was keenly observant, and of eager curiosity concerning everything that attracted his attention, and with all his practical good sense, was not without a poetical and romantic side to his nature. His mother was a lady of ability, wide information, and force of character; who, from the very strenuousness with which she had for so many years herself pursued a course of self-improvement, combined with her love for her only child, and her sense of responsibility concerning him, was more likely to err through over-severity than over-indulgence. It was soon manifest to the parents that this child united unusual gifts to an unusual sensibility. It became their object, therefore, to see that his development was wisely ordered, and particularly that it was not purchased at the cost of a diseased excitability. Probably for this reason he was not sent to school till he was fourteen, his mother during the earlier years being his sole instructor. Looking back upon this time, Ruskin himself was disposed to think that the circumstances of his childhood had not been

altogether fortunate, and that he had suffered from a training both too formal and too luxurious. Some of the stories related of his mother would almost seem to indicate an unusual harshness and want of sympathy. It is said that when her baby cried to reach the tea-kettle, she forced the nurse to let him touch it, and sent him from the room screaming. It is also related of her that when he tumbled down stairs, she whipped him that he might learn to be careful; and that when he came in to dessert or played among the fruit trees, she drew the line at one currant. In this way the child was doubtless taught lessons of carefulness, temperance, and self-control, which he never afterwards forgot.

There are many stories of his youthful precocity. At five he had read many books. He could write at six, and at once began to compose. From 1826 to 1829 he was engaged upon a work entitled *Harry and Lucy Concluded, or Early Lessons*. It was never finished, but filled three bound volumes, all carefully printed and illustrated by his own hand, with title page, tables of contents, errata, etc., complete. Much of the material for this writing was obtained from the family tours on which the Ruskins went from time to time, and which formed an invaluable part of the child's education. It was his father's custom in the summer to travel over a considerable portion of England to take orders for his firm; and on such occasions the private carriage of Mr Telford, the moneyed partner, was placed at his disposal. There

was room for quite a family party, and Mr Ruskin would be accompanied by his wife, little John, cousin Mary, and the nurse. It would be difficult to say whether on these occasions business or pleasure predominated. They at least had their element of danger as tending to over-stimulate an eager and sensitive child. Not content with taking water-colour sketches of objects of interest encountered on the way, Mr Ruskin, the father, would fill his note-books with such information as he could glean upon the spot respecting them. Thus every castle and cathedral, mouldering abbey and stately mansion, museum and picture gallery, to say nothing of the forms of nature and living things, became the subject of eager interest and earnest inquiry. The child of six caught the father's enthusiasm. He also must needs have his note-books and make his sketches. The bearing of this upon the tastes and the after career of Ruskin it is not difficult to see. Nothing is more characteristic of him in later years than the free use of note-books in his many wanderings, both for elaborate description and careful sketching. We may even say that out of these note-books came the great works that made his reputation. Up to his sixteenth year four of these tours had been in Scotland, three in the Lake District of England, one in Wales, and two on the Continent, embracing the Rhine countries and Switzerland.

When he had reached the limit of his mother's instructions, tutors were engaged to give him lessons in Greek, Latin, Mathematics, and Drawing. His

eager nature and his great ability made progress rapid, but he never cared for classical study, and as might have been expected, it was into the drawing lesson that he put most of himself. Perceiving what his bent was, his father spared no expense in procuring for him the best available teaching, and for a time therefore he had the advantage of lessons from such fine water-colourists as Copley Fielding and J. D. Harding. The church, however, not literature or art, was the profession his parents desired for him, their highest ambition being to see their son a bishop.

When Ruskin was fourteen, it was thought well that he should have some experience of school life before going to the university. He was therefore placed with the Rev. T. Dale, but had to be withdrawn in consequence of an attack of pleurisy, one of the many more or less serious illnesses from which Mr Ruskin has suffered during his long life. In 1837 he entered upon his studies at Christ's College, Oxford. His course was not brilliant, its only distinction being the Newdigate prize for poetry, which, after several failures, he at last succeeded in winning. He graduated B.A. in 1842.

Considering his bad health, and the many interests that attracted him outside of university work, it is not to be wondered at that the routine studies should have only partially engaged him. It was altogether natural that the eager intellectual and emotional forces of Ruskin's nature should find expression in poetry. It is not possible to say when he began

verse-making, but for twelve years onwards from 1834, when he was fifteen, he was a constant contributor in verse to various publications. Before his work as a poet had been merged in his far greater work as a writer of ornate and richly poetical prose, he had given unquestionable proof that there was talent, if not a touch of genius, as well as the audacity of youth, in these writings. During all this period of poetical activity, he had also been furnishing notes to various scientific and art magazines; and some of these, especially those on architectural subjects, had come to be highly esteemed, and even to have a certain authority. In 1843, he finally determined his course in life, by the publication of the first volume of what is generally regarded as his masterpiece: *Modern Painters, their Superiority in the Art of Landscape Painting to the Ancient Masters: by a Graduate of Oxford.* This bold proceeding was the outcome of the intense admiration for Turner's work that had recently grown up within him; and its object was to vindicate for Turner a position as a landscape painter superior to that of all the older masters whom it had been customary to accept as models. Loud was the clamour which this audacious and heretical work called forth. The book, however, gradually made its way. There was much besides the praise of Turner in it. Critics found it easier to abuse than to answer it. Even professional painters admitted that the writer knew his subject, and they discovered much that was suggestive in its discussions concerning form and

colour; while to the general reader the extraordinary richness and brilliance of its descriptive passages furnished a unique form of pleasure. Long before *Modern Painters* was completed by the publication of its fifth volume in 1860, Ruskin had become one of the prose classics of English literature, and his magnificent descriptions of mountains, waves, and clouds had produced not only a keener artistic sense, but also the conviction that whole worlds of wonder and beauty, hitherto undreamt of, await the seeing eye that brings a patient reverence and love to the observation of nature. Here lies Ruskin's great distinction, that more even than the poets he has unveiled for us the beautiful in nature. But here also, as in all his books, he has taught that the moral qualities of truth, sincerity, and an earnest purpose are required in him who would discover either the secrets of art, the wondrous meaning and beauty of nature, or the whole duty of man to man. In this he is throughout consistent, although in almost everything else his opinions have totally changed since *Modern Painters* first appeared. While this great work was in progress, he produced a series of books in which he expounded in similar fashion the principles of architecture. The *Seven Lamps of Architecture* appeared in 1849, followed by the magnificent *Stones of Venice* (1851-53), and his Edinburgh *Lectures on Architecture and Painting* (1854). In these writings also we find the most exquisite descriptive work by pen and pencil, together with the sermons in stones

which noble architectural forms suggest to this critic, who is also a mystic and preacher of righteousness. In his view architecture is far more than mere building, is nothing less indeed than the embodiment in stone of all that highest and noblest in the builder and his age. Here also as in painting it is the ethical element in art, or its spiritual significance, that attracts him, the Seven Lamps representing to him such ethical principles as sacrifice, truth, power, beauty, life, memory and obedience.

Ruskin has founded no school either in painting or architecture. Probably no great man has acknowledged him as father in either art. It is true that a band of clever artists and poets known as the Pre-Raphaelites were united on principles of truth, simplicity and whole-hearted devotion similar to those which he had been so strenuously advocating, and that he gave them his heartiest support in his paper on *Pre-Raphaelitism* (1851); but it cannot be said that they owed their origin to him. But if he is not the parent of any distinctive school, there can be no doubt that he has influenced the whole of art by bringing it face to face with nature, by revealing to it the exceeding beauty of material forms, and by showing how much of the perception of this beauty and the power to reproduce it, is due to ethical qualities in the artist himself, his age, and the nation to which he belongs. He has taught as no other has the lesson of waiting patiently, laboriously, lovingly upon nature, with serious intent to follow her guidance at what-

ever cost to personal prejudice and the sanctity of old ideals.

But Ruskin is a philanthropist as well as a great art critic. In this aspect of his character may be seen even more strikingly displayed the qualities of impulsiveness and extravagance that are undoubtedly noticeable in him. And yet many of the things which thirty years ago would have been considered the freaks of a weak and ill-balanced mind look very like foresight now. For nothing has he been so widely ridiculed as for his many excursions into the thorny fields of political economy. In the early days when the *Cornhill Magazine* was under Thackeray's editorship, Ruskin contributed four articles on economic subjects under the title of *Unto this Last* (1860); but on the appearance of the fourth of the series, Mr Thackeray intimated to him that in consequence of the strong and unanimous disapproval by his readers of the sentiments expressed in these articles, it would be impossible for him to receive any more. The same thing happened with *Fraser's Magazine* in connection with similar articles, afterwards republished under the title, *Munera Pulveris* (1872). They impeached the commercialism of the age as responsible for much of its poverty and vice, pled for the introduction of the element of human affection into the relations between employers and employed, and insisted that the wages of the labourer should be fixed and uniform like those of soldiers and professional men, and not regulated by competition. He has expanded these economic

theories in other and later works such as *Time and Tide, by Weare and Tyne* (1868), and *Fors Clavigera* (1871-84). Many of the opinions expressed in these books have grown familiar to the public mind, and do not now seem so revolutionary as they did at first. But at the time they were treated with something like angry contempt, as the frothy and mischievous ravings of a visionary. Many even doubted the sanity of the writer, but none could doubt his absolute sincerity. By the death of his father and mother, Ruskin had inherited a fortune of not less than £200,000, every penny of which has gone in acts of private and general beneficence, or in attempts, some of them painfully chimerical, to give practical shape to his modified socialism. Of these were the providing of model dwellings for the poor, experiments in co-operative trading, farming on something like communistic principles, working-men's colleges, and the furnishing, housing, and endowment of the Ruskin Museum, Sheffield. Perhaps, however, none of his economic experiments have attracted so much attention as his invasion of the realm of the British tradesman as the printer and publisher of his own works. From a villa at Orpington in Kent, his friend, Mr George Allen, declining all aid from advertisements, for many years sent forth the Ruskin books to public and bookseller alike, with no difference of price. At first the objections to this singular arrangement were very strong, but the feeling so far died down, and the sale of these works continued to be very large even before

the transference of the business to London under new arrangements for the trade.

Of Ruskin's other books mention may be made of *Sesame and Lilies* (1865), one of his most popular works; *The Crown of Wild Olives* (1866), *The Queen of The Air* (1869) and *Preterita* (1885-1889), an extremely interesting and characteristic autobiography, covering, however, only a portion of his life.

His books represent only a part of Ruskin's many-sided activity. For many years he held the Slade Professorship of Fine Art at Oxford, and much of his most characteristic thought passed into the various courses of Lectures delivered to the students. He resigned his chair at length because of a difference of opinion with his university on the subject of vivisection, to which as an ardent lover of animals he was strongly opposed. But he lectured to many institutions besides, and was ever as ready to scatter his intellectual wealth abroad, as he was to disperse his material means.

Now, broken in health by several severe illnesses, and therefore retired from his many labours, Ruskin lives in comparative seclusion within his country house of Brantwood, on the shores of Coniston Lake, under the shadow of the mountains he has always loved with such devotion. The income he derives from his books is sufficient both for his own wants and for those of the pensioners who are dependent upon his bounty. Thus the generous humanity of the man remains, and for nothing will he be more

regarded by posterity than for that. But their reverence will also take account of his high ideal of life, of his good intentions, if not of his successful endeavours, in the cause of social reform, and of a style, which after all deductions have been made for faults of excess, diffuseness, and over-luxuriance, remains unequalled for descriptive power and eloquence.

Matthew Arnold (1822-1888) is also noted for the excellence of his prose style. The permanent reputation of this writer, however, will probably rest upon his poetry rather than upon his prose. But, as has been mentioned in the sketch of his life and poetic career, he wrote almost nothing in poetry during his last twenty years, while he wrote much in prose. His subjects were Criticism, Middle-Class Education, Culture, the Official Recognition of Literature, Church and State, and Philistinism—a term which with him meant the narrowness, vulgarity, and want of taste of the unlearned as opposed to the width and refinement of the cultured class. He had not a little also to say of Religion; but it was religion out of which had been eliminated the supernatural and apparently all hope of a future life, and which seems to have represented to him nothing more than a life of righteousness based on Bible morality.

Arnold's critical work was especially good. The best of it is to be found in *The Essays on Criticism*, published in 1865. The tone of his prose writings, unlike his poetry, is bright, witty, and exhilarating,

with a sparkle that gives to them a peculiar charm. He is a master of phrase, and many of his sayings, such as 'sweetness and light,' and 'a stream of tendency, not ourselves, that makes for righteousness,' have passed into the currency of English speech. His opinions on many subjects were by no means acceptable, but were less objectionable than his manner of expressing them. The opposition thus called forth in many minds was, besides, accentuated by the scorn and superciliousness of his attitude, and the vehemence of his ridicule. He gave the impression of being a very superior person, and of regarding with but scant respect any opinion that differed from his own. Towards Dissent especially he was contemptuously and unjustly bitter. He undoubtedly did good, however, in helping to break down the insular prejudice and self-sufficiency of ordinary English character, and in leading the way to a truer and more wholesome form of literary criticism.

His principal works in prose—most of them published originally in serial form—in addition to the *Essays on Criticism*, are *Lectures on Translating Homer*, *The Study of Celtic Literature*, *Schools and Universities on the Continent*, *Culture and Anarchy*, *St Paul and Protestantism*, *Literature and Dogma*, *God and the Bible*, and *Last Essays on Church and State*. All these writings show brilliant qualities of style, and set forth the opinions of the writer with great point and force, but they have probably already accomplished all they are likely to effect.

In **Dr John Brown of Edinburgh (1810-1882)**, the friend of Thackeray and John Leech, and the author of *Rab and his Friends* and *Pet Marjorie*, is to be found a true man of genius. Never was an author more deeply or more justly loved. His many friends recall with a peculiar softening his exquisite qualities of mind and heart—his delicate fancy and frolicsome humour, his earnest pleading for downrightness and intensity of character and life, the sweetness of his charity, his unselfish thoughtfulness for others, and his childlike freshness, simplicity and honest impulsiveness. All loved him for his sunny nature; those who knew him best were still more endeared to him by the mysterious cross which this sweet and gentle spirit, in long intervals of gloom, was called upon to bear.

But for Brown's busy life as a physician in city practice, the compulsion of circumstance that had made for his friend Thackeray a career in literature, might also in his case have substituted works of greater and more permanent literary importance for the brightness and daintiness, the humour and pathos of those few exquisite essays, fruits of his leisure (*Horæ Subsecivæ*, he called them) which are all Brown's legacy to the world. In all of them, besides the qualities just mentioned, we see an ever-present sense of the poetry of life, tinged with the fine humanity of the author, and a perfectly frank and agreeable egotism. The occasion of each piece may be some outward fact—a Border landscape, an oddity

in human character, the quaintness of a child's mind, or even the vagaries of a dog; but invariably it will be found that its true motive is something within himself—a freak of his own imagination, a throb of his deep pity, an utterance of some strong personal love or preference, and therefore essentially a feature of himself.

Dr Brown's finest piece of writing is his contribution to a Biography of his father, entitled *A letter addressed to the Rev. John Cairns, D.D.;* but his reputation will chiefly rest on *Rab and his Friends*, a gem without a flaw, the beautiful simplicity and artlessness of which is the very perfection of art. In such pieces as *Pet Marjorie* and *Queen Mary's Garden* he has made us feel the beatings of a child's heart against our own. And in a number of pieces as remarkable for their humour as their pathos, he has vindicated as no other man ever did the claims of what Burns would have called our 'poor earth-born companion, an' fellow-mortal,' the dog, to a kindly compassion and consideration. These and all the other pieces contained in the three volumes entitled *Horæ Subsecivæ* are full of a fine literary art and a still more exquisite sweetness born of the tender humanity of the author himself.

If the writers of the latter half of the reign are not so distinguished, they at least show high qualities of accomplishment, and greatly exceed those of the earlier period in point of numbers. Within these later de-

cades we find the exquisite exercises in prose style of Robert Louis Stevenson; the brilliance of Mr John Morley; the finely-balanced powers and the acute and judicious criticism of Mr R. H. Hutton, the veteran editor of the *Spectator;* the versatile gifts of Mr Andrew Lang; the ample knowledge of Professor Saintsbury and Frederick Harrison; the many literary graces of such men as Edmund Gosse, W. E. Henley, and Augustine Birrell; and the more remote, but exquisite qualities of Walter Pater, the author of *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*, *Marius the Epicurean*, and *Gaston de Latour*.

The mere mention of these names is sufficient to show to what an extent the best of recent miscellaneous literature has taken the form of literary criticism; but it also shows how all-pervading has been the influence of journalism during the Victorian period. A large proportion of the writings of these authors made their first appearance in serial form. It may safely be said that much more of this class of writing, published anonymously, now lies buried in forgotten volumes of the larger 'Reviews' and in the pages of old monthly or weekly magazines, or has even passed into oblivion with the sheets of the daily newspaper in which it first saw the light. No doubt very much of it was poor and ephemeral in quality, and deserved no better fate. Still, unquestionably, much has thus been lost which, but for the form of publication, might justly, on account of both force and subtlety of thought, and distinction of style, have been

added to the permanent gains of literature. Journalism, indeed, was never so potent or so respectable as now. Faults it has, both on the moral and literary side; but, on the whole, its aims and motives are high; and for the best work of this class something more is now demanded than plausible assurance, a lively wit, a superficial knowledge, and fluency of expression.

CHAPTER VIII

Men of Science and Philosophers

THE records of Science during the Victorian Era have been peculiarly rich and interesting. The tales they have to tell of triumphant research and discovery in a great variety of fields, read more like a page from old romance than anything else. It may safely be said that the achievements of science during the last sixty years have far more than exceeded the sum total of such achievements during all the human centuries preceding. It is little matter of wonder, therefore, that the scientific spirit should have passed so deeply into the forms of Victorian thought, or that the presence of this spirit should form one of the distinctive characteristics of Victorian literature. A hard and materialistic tone may sometimes have resulted, but, on the whole, the scientific spirit has brought gains, even to the imaginative part of literature, by furnishing it with endless new material, and by presenting to it the wonderful in forms which the unassisted imagination could never have conceived. The graver parts of literature also have been benefited by

its call to patient inquiry, exhaustive research, and the methods of the logical reason. Strictly speaking, however, the progress and victories of science do not fall within the scope of the present work. Only in so far as the records of these have themselves taken literary form, or have been the occasion of calling forth works of a popular rather than a technical character, need they be included in a sketch of Victorian literature. Even so much, however, is more than can be attempted here. Only a very few of the heroes of research and deep thinking can be so much as mentioned within the limits of a work like this.

In the field of science, literature has, during the Victorian period, concentrated its interest on the speculations that have arisen concerning the results of biological inquiry. No scientific subject, indeed, has ever aroused anything like the general interest that has been attracted to the theory of Evolution as illustrated by the researches of Charles Darwin.

Charles Darwin (1809-1882). The name of Charles Darwin will live in the records of Victorian Literature as that of the author of the most remarkable scientific book of the century. *The Origin of Species by Natural Selection* is universally admitted to have been a work of epoch-making significance, and to have revolutionised the whole course of modern scientific thought; for even where its conclusions have not been accepted, their influence has been deeply felt, and has given colour to all succeeding speculation, especially in the sphere of biological inquiry.

The author of this great work was born at Shrewsbury in 1809, the year in which Alfred Tennyson and Mr Gladstone also were born. His father, a prosperous physician of that town, was, as Charles Darwin assures us, a man of the keenest observation. His grandfather was the famous Erasmus Darwin, the philosophical poet of *The Botanic Garden*, who also had his speculations concerning the Origin of Species. At eight years of age Charles was sent to a day school in Shrewsbury; but even before this time, the inborn tastes of his life had manifested themselves. In various small ways he was even then a collector of plants, insects, and minerals. After a year he was transferred to Dr Butler's school in the same town. His connection as a boarder with this school extended over seven years, and yielded him but little profit. It was a classical school, and he had no aptitude for languages. Evidently his father and his teachers agreed in thinking that he was below, rather than above the average standard of boys. The truth is that the set studies of school were doing nothing to call forth the really remarkable powers that were latent in him. The science of mathematics was not taught, and no provision whatever was made for the development of his quite extraordinary faculty of observation. He has left on record that poetry, including the works of Thomson, Scott, Byron, and especially the historical plays of Shakespeare, had at this time considerable attraction for him. White's *Natural History of Selborne*, and a book entitled *The Wonders of the*

World, were also eagerly read and prized. But according to Darwin himself the best part of his education during the school period was his introduction to experimental philosophy in his father's tool house, where his elder brother Erasmus, a medical student, had set up a laboratory.

In 1825 he accompanied his brother Erasmus to Edinburgh, where for two years he studied in the medical classes of the University. These years also Darwin was disposed to think were wasted. The academical studies had not much attraction for him; and the college lectures, with the single exception of those on chemistry, he found intolerably dull and tiresome. In later life he greatly regretted that he had not persevered with his dissections, on the ground that work of this kind would have been of invaluable service to him. But he could not endure the operating theatre, the two cases he saw there fairly haunting him for many a year afterwards. He was fortunate, however, in securing the friendship of several clever young men of tastes similar to his own. With them he would make excursions in the neighbourhood of the Forth for the purpose of studying marine zoology; and at other times would accompany them to the meetings of the Plinian and Wernerian Societies, and hear papers on Natural History read and discussed. To the former of these, his own earliest papers were presented. Whatever want of profit, therefore, there may have been in his stay at the Northern University, all this doubtless acted as a healthy stimulant on a

young man of his tastes and aspirations; for he tells us that he was never without the ambition to achieve something in connection with Natural History that would bring him reputation.

In consequence of his father's affluent circumstances, the question of a profession was not with Darwin a serious one. After the two years at Edinburgh, he abandoned all thought of medicine, but seems to have had the Church in view when in 1828 he went to Cambridge. His stay here extended over three years, during which he appears to have had as little interest in academical study as before; no pursuit, as he tells us, being followed with nearly so much pleasure as collecting beetles. He gives the following proof of his zeal: 'One day, on tearing off some old bark, I saw two rare beetles, and seized one in each hand. Then I saw a third and new kind, which I could not bear to lose, so that I popped the one which I held in my right hand into my mouth. Alas! it ejected some intensely acrid fluid, which burnt my tongue, so that I was forced to spit the beetle out, which was lost as was the third one.'

The most fortunate circumstance of his stay at Cambridge also is to be found in his scientific intimacies, especially that with Professor Henslow, a man of the greatest scientific attainments in the departments of Botany and Entomology, which also were of greatest interest to Darwin. It was through Professor Henslow that in 1831 he was invited to accompany Captain Fitzroy as naturalist in the voyage

of H.M. ship *Beagle*. This memorable voyage extended over five years, and was considered by Darwin himself to have determined his career, and to have been by far the most important event in his life. There is no further thought of a profession now; he has found his life-work. It is scarcely too much to say that all Darwin's scientific career, all his writings, with all their original contributions to the science of his time, are to be found, in germ at least, within the years of this remarkable voyage. It was not merely that it gave to the young naturalist, and that at an impressionable period of life, the kind of education that comes from extensive travel over many seas and lands, but that it furnished him with unparalleled opportunities for the exercise of a faculty of observation of the very highest order. Already in his twenty-first year the high qualifications of the true man of science assert themselves—his keen observation, his patient industry in collecting facts, his bold generalisations in the explanation of phenomena, and his intense enthusiasm in the cause of science. Looking back upon this time, he used to say that his most vivid and pleasing recollections were of the glories of the tropical forest, in which he had found such unique opportunities for watching the struggle for existence in animal and vegetable forms. His interest in geological phenomena was almost equally great, and it was at this time that he made the immense mass of observations embodied in such earlier works as *Coral Reefs* (1842), *Volcanic Islands* (1844), and *Geological*

Observations on South America (1846). Of these the most important and popular was that on *Coral Reefs*, which showed such a mastery of scientific method, and such an adequacy to explain the facts of the case, that men of science very soon gave its theory of oceanic subsidence their warm admiration and cordial acceptance. Of late years some of its positions have been questioned by Dr Murray of the *Challenger* and others, without however in any way lessening the importance of Darwin's researches.

In 1836 he was back in London, but with a somewhat enfeebled constitution. He had never been altogether free from sea-sickness during the whole five years of the voyage. The effects seem to have remained with him ever afterwards; and it was only by living a careful and retired life, that he was able to accomplish the great works with which his name is associated. His first literary labour after his return was the preparation of his *Journal of a Naturalist on Board* H.M. *Ship* '*Beagle*,' which was published in 1839. It is a work of the greatest interest and value, and still retains its popularity.

In the same year, Darwin married his cousin, Emma Wedgwood, and after a few years' residence in London, went, in 1842, to live at Down, near Beckenham, in Kent. Here he spent the remaining forty years of his life without incident of any kind, other than the publication of his various books, and the carrying on of a correspondence that embraced the foremost men of science of the time. We learn that for more

than twenty years the theory of Evolution to which he has given expression in his greatest work, had been present to his mind; and that during all that time he had been slowly and patiently maturing his arguments, and accumulating the facts by which they were to be supported. Even when, in 1859, *The Origin of Species* was at last given to the world, it was still without much of the apparatus of fact which, according to his design, was to accompany his arguments. He had been startled to discover that others had been working at the same problem, and that, knowing nothing of his researches, they had reached almost identical conclusions.

In June 1858, he received from the eminent naturalist Alfred Russel Wallace, who was then working in the Malay Archipelago, the manuscript of an essay, *On the Tendency of Varieties to Depart Indefinitely from the Original Type*, in which, much to his disturbance, he recognised his own arguments and his own conclusions quite independently reached by another. He lost no time in submitting the paper to his friends, Professor Hooker and Sir Charles Lyell, both of whom had for fifteen years been well acquainted with his own speculations; and on their advice a joint-paper, bearing the names of Darwin and Wallace, was read to the Linnæan Society, *On the Tendency of Species to form Varieties; and on the Perpetuation of Varieties and Species by Natural Means of Selection.* It thus appears that the honours of discovery, if discovery it

can be called, must be divided equally between the two great naturalists.

Longer delay was now impossible, and accordingly in 1859 the work now everywhere known as *The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* was published. It not only attracted great attention, but everywhere gave rise to embittered controversy. It was the popularly received, and also, at that time, the scientific opinion, that species were permanent and immutable; in other words, that in greater or less conformity to the original type, they had remained the same through all the periods of biological time. Darwin, on the other hand, contended that species were mutable, and that they bore evidence, no less than varieties, of having been developed from earlier and simpler forms. Evolution was no new idea. Others, for example Erasmus Darwin, Lamarck, Robert Chambers, and Herbert Spencer, had anticipated Darwin in the enunciation of it. It was his distinction that in support of this theory he produced a vast array of most interesting and reliable facts showing modification by descent, and illustrating the alleged struggle for existence in plants and animals. He showed what a number of these forms, thus called into life, are continually perishing, and accounted for it by a principle to which he gave the name of 'Natural Selection,' but which Herbert Spencer more happily called 'the survival of the fittest.' In this struggle, according to Darwin, the unfavourable variation, or that which is less generously equipped and can less readily adapt

itself to circumstances, will die out, while the favourable one will survive; the result being the formation of a new species. In his view, the struggle is never-ending. New foes are found in forces that require a more strenuous energy of resistance, or a wider adaptability; and the process of elimination is repeated, the fittest, of course, always surviving. It is possible, therefore, on this hypothesis to go back through all the ages of the life history of our globe, along a series of developments in which the passage backwards is always from higher to lower forms until the beginnings of life are reached in one or more primordial cells. And here the theory is confronted with its most serious difficulty. To the question, 'What then?' it has no answer to give. Darwin himself is frank enough to confess that he cannot explain the life of these cells. The idea of spontaneous generation he unhesitatingly rejects. The student of this theory, indeed, cannot but be struck with the doubts and hesitations of its author. He denies design in nature, but confesses that it is difficult to do so. He opposes Creation and Evolution as irreconcilable alternatives, yet seems to hold the theistic position. He does not shrink from avowing his belief that man also is the product of this slow development, but will not admit that he is sprung from the apes, although of the same stock as they. Objectionable in popular opinion though much of the *Origin* was, Darwin's *Descent of Man* (1871) struck an even harsher note of discord, and roused a still stronger opposition. It cannot, however, be

said to have altered anything. Absolutely no reliable trace of Simian ancestry, or cousinhood, as Darwin in effect puts it, has ever yet been discovered. The earliest human remains, going back to the very dawn of history, are practically identical with those of to-day. The 'missing link' so eagerly sought for has not been found. Science is compelled to acknowledge that the physical distance between man and the ape was as great in the earliest human ages as it is now. And if, notwithstanding this physical discrepancy, we admit the startling similarities of structure between man and the higher vertebrates, what means can be suggested for bridging over the tremendous chasm that separates the intellectual and moral nature even of the lowest man from the highest of the apes?

By the *Descent of Man*, the *Variation of Animals and Plants under Domestication* (1868), and the *Expression of the Emotions in Men and Animals* (1872), Darwin made intensely interesting and important contributions to science, and placed his great theory fully before the world. It remains, however, a theory still. There is and there can be no positive proof that species ever have been formed in the manner described. Even such acute thinkers as Huxley, not unfavourably disposed, have been constrained to acknowledge that so-called 'natural selection' has not been proved to be a fact. Moreover the alternative—Creation or Evolution—is seen to be unnecessary. At the point to which Evolution conducts us, there is still life to be accounted for.

And if so, why not by God and a creative act? And if by one such act, why not by many, either in one period or in successive periods of time? Evolution in some form, although it may not be in the Darwinian sense, is undoubtedly a fact, and this it is the glory of Darwin to have demonstrated. But Evolution is not incompatible with Creation; and devout minds can even feel their reverence quickened by the thought of the Creative Will manifesting itself over long stretches of time in successive and ever-heightening developments of animal and vegetable life.

Outside of these controversies Darwin had put a singularly fresh and vivid interest into the study of certain other departments of natural history, by his fascinating *Fertilisation of Orchids* (1862), *Climbing Plants* (1864), *Insectivorous Plants* (1875), *Movement in Plants* (1880), and *Earthworms* (1881).

Darwin's books owe comparatively little to the graces of style. He wrote slowly, and confesses to have found composition difficult. It was not therefore to the literary quality of his work, but to the interest attaching to the numberless observations of facts that he recorded, and the startling nature of the speculations to which they led him, that the extraordinary success of his books was due.

All those who knew Darwin have recorded the charm of his personal character and manner. He was genial and affectionate, simple and frank, modest and diffident. None of his opponents could have been more ready to acknowledge the force of an

argument that told against his theories than he was himself. His concessions indeed were so many and so important, that towards the close of his life but little was left of the theory of Natural Selection, of which he had made so much. Orthodox theological opinion had been up in arms against him, because his speculations were supposed to be dishonouring to human nature, and hostile to the conception of a personal Creator. But Darwin, while boldly accepting the conclusions to which his scientific opinions led him, deprecated with a fine frankness that undue stress should be put upon his private religious opinions, on the ground that the religious sentiment had never been strongly developed in him. There were further limitations, growing with his years, that have a peculiar psychological interest. He mentions that up to the age of thirty, he derived great pleasure from certain of the poets, including Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Shelley, but regrets that afterwards this taste entirely left him, so that he found the attempt to read even Shakespeare, whose historical plays especially used to have such an interest for him, nauseating and unpleasant. In the same way, an early taste for pictures also disappeared, as did much of his former enjoyment in music. The only apparent exception to this decay on the emotional, imaginative, and æsthetic side of his nature, is to be found in his life-long enjoyment of novel-reading, a part of every day being spent either in reading, or having read to him, a portion of some popular fiction.

He died at Down on the 19th of April, 1882, and was buried in Westminster Abbey, a few feet from the grave of Sir Isaac Newton.

The heated controversies that arose with the publication of the *Origin of Species* owe something of their bitterness to the vehemence both of defence and attack shown by such writers as Professors Huxley and Tyndall, who, in support of this new departure in scientific thought, brought to its advocacy a lucidity and eloquence of statement, a brilliance and force of imagination, an amount of general culture, and a power of literary expression to which Darwin could lay no claim.

Although already well known as an accomplished zoologist, **Thomas H. Huxley (1825-1895)** may be said to have floated into general recognition on the numberless papers and addresses in which he strove to vindicate the Darwinian position. His earlier history reads not unlike a second edition of Darwin's.

He had no advantages of education, and never entered a university. But in his youth he was an omnivorous reader of books, and these were of a quality that could scarcely have been expected. He particularly mentions the impression made upon his mind by Guizot's *History of Civilisation* and Sir William Hamilton's Edinburgh Review article on a *Philosophy of the Unconditioned.*

It is evident that Hamilton's theory as to the limitations of human knowledge influenced all his

future thinkings on metaphysical and theological subjects, for which, strange to say, he always had a liking. In his last paper, an unfinished criticism of Mr Balfour's *Foundations of Belief*, published in the *Fortnightly Review* a few weeks before his death, Mr Huxley expressly traces the form of Agnosticism he professed to Hamilton's theory of the relativity of human knowledge.

Seeing that he lived to be the arch-enemy of what he called 'clerical-mindedness,' it is strange to find in his youth aspirations that pointed towards the church. Ultimately, after some medical training at Charing Cross Hospital, London, he entered the Royal Navy as Assistant-Surgeon, and served on board the *Rattlesnake* between the years 1846 and 1850. In the survey of the Great Barrier Reef on the eastern side of Australia, and the neighbouring Louisiade Archipelago, he had the opportunity of making those careful studies in marine zoology, the results of which he contributed from time to time to the Royal and Linnæan Societies. On his return he was admitted to the fellowship of the Royal Society, and in 1854 was appointed Professor of Natural History in the Royal School of Mines, and of Physiology at the Royal Institution. In 1859 he published in *The Oceanic Hydrozoa* the results of his observations in the long voyage of the *Rattlesnake*. Many other writings of a purely scientific character followed, dealing chiefly with subjects in Comparative Anatomy and Physiology. To the general reader, however, he is better known by such works as

Man's Place in Nature, *David Hume*, *Darwiniana*, and the various volumes of collected essays and public addresses, published under such titles as *Science and Education*, *Science and Hebrew Tradition*, *Science and Christian Tradition*.

In these latter his hostile attitude to accepted religious opinion is undisguised, as also are the vigour, polish, and brilliance of his polemical style. The love of the battle is strong in Huxley. He buckles on his armour with something of the warrior's alacrity. He has an instinctive perception of the weak points of an adversary. The rapier thrusts of his sarcasm are swift and deadly. The foe he holds himself especially charged to overcome is clericalism, and he fails to see that the spirit he so dislikes under that name, is very largely present in himself. The arrogant dogmatism, as he would call it, of the clerical mind when applied to scientific questions, is no less manifest in his own summary dealings with problems of theology. No one will deny to him the art of seeing clearly, and of putting clearly into words, what he sees. His definition that science is nothing but trained and organised common-sense is illustrated by his own native shrewdness and keenness of intellect. Whether, however, with all his gifts he has actually advanced the causes on which he spent so much controversy may be doubted. It cannot be said that his attacks on religion have had any very disastrous result, and as for the Darwinian theory of Evolution, not only has it not received the assent of scientific men, but it did not

even receive as a demonstrated fact the adhesion of Huxley himself.

A certain warmth and impetuosity of impulse are to be noted in this great man as truly as are his candour, his intellectual vigour, and his splendid command both of reasoning power and of fit and lucid language. The man of letters is no less distinctly seen in him than the man of science. There is much in his writings both as to their matter and their form, that the general reader, having no taste for science, can fully appreciate, and that give to them a true value as literature. Professor Huxley died at his villa of Hodeslea, Eastbourne, on the 29th of June 1895.

John Tyndall (1820-1893), another strenuous supporter of the Evolution theory, was also one of the greatest physicists of the age. The value of his contributions to science, especially on such subjects as light, heat, and sound, secured for him a European reputation, which he brilliantly sustained. To the gift of clear exposition, Professor Tyndall united eloquence, imagination, and a feeling for poetry. When the matter was one of purely scientific exposition, these qualities were wont to lend a peculiar charm to his deliverances. On the other hand, in any matter of controversy, he was apt to show himself wanting in moderation not only in the use of language, which was often stronger than the occasion warranted, but also, as in his address from the Presidential Chair of the British Association at its meeting at Belfast in

1874, in treating with a cavalier rudeness the most cherished opinions of those to whom he was opposed. Tyndall united in himself all the gifts of the scientific and the literary man. After a long illness he died towards the close of 1893.

One would like to dwell upon the well-balanced and complete career of **Sir Richard Owen (1804-1892).** Acknowledged to be the greatest anatomist of the century, he was also a man of wide and generous culture, as might be expected of the friend and associate of the greatest thinkers, poets, novelists, musicians, and statesmen of the time. He was never a convert to Darwinism. He was not convinced that the origin of species by natural selection had been made out ; and he deprecated the materialistic trend of this theory, clinging to the last to the belief in an immaterial spirit, and the hope of continuing in a future life the researches intermitted here. From his biography recently published by his grandson, and elsewhere in this book referred to, the following extracts are taken, to set this great man, outside of his scientific work, distinctly before us.

Referring to the ideal home of his later years in Richmond Park, he says: 'I was awoke at three o'clock on Sunday morning, by a concert of a very unusual kind to my ears, and, tempted by the unwonted strains, I stole down into the garden. Day was grayly dawning in the north-east and some light clouds were floating across a pearly sky. The nightingales

were sending forth interrupted capricious carols from every bush; with a higher treble for some unknown warbler, and a lower one for thrushes and blackbirds. The distant curlew kept up a running tenor accompaniment, and the more distant rookery gave out a steady bass; with the occasional addition of the wood-pigeon's plaintive coo-oo. Then came the echo of the cheery crow of a distant cock, the lowing of the steer, and the drowsy hum of the humble bee. The air was fragrant with newly opening azaleas and whitethorn, and I was tempted to the brink of the little lake by the strange gambols and gyrations of the great black-backed carp. At half-past four, I returned again to bed, and slept till half-past nine, in comfortable instinctive consciousness that the whole was a reality, and no early morning dream.'

The following words, taken from the concluding passage of his Rede Lecture delivered at Cambridge in 1859, will show how reverently and with how deep a sense of responsibility, this great man regarded the subjects with which it was his life-business to deal. After a description of the human body he proceeds:—'Such are the dominating powers with which we, and we alone, are gifted! I say gifted, for the surpassing organisation was no gift of ours. "It is He that made us, and not we ourselves." This frame is a temporary trust, for the uses of which we are responsible to the Maker. O you who possess it in all the supple vigour of lusty youth, think well what it is that He has committed to your keeping! Waste not its energies;

dull them not by sloth ; spoil them not by pleasures ! The supreme work of Creation has been accomplished that you might possess a body, the sole erect, of all animal bodies the most free, and for what ? For the service of the soul. Strive to realise the conditions of the possession of this wondrous structure. Think what it may become—the Temple of the Holy Spirit ! Defile it not. Seek rather to adorn it with all meet and becoming gifts, and with fair furniture, moral and intellectual.'

Professor Owen, 'the tall man with great glittering eyes,' as described by Carlyle, lived to reach his eighty-ninth year, and died on December 18, 1892, in the full possession of all his great mental faculties. Next to his work in science, his most enduring monument is likely to be the noble Natural History Museum at South Kensington, the finest in the world, the fruit of much of his most anxious thought and self-denying labour during the closing years of his life.

Of the younger race of biologists no one was more deeply loved, showed greater promise, or indeed did more abundant work than **George J. Romanes (1848-1894).** He was both the disciple and the friend of Darwin, who, to the end of his life, continued to meet and correspond with his young admirer with a beautiful intimacy of affection. The influence of this friendship is to be seen in such works from the pen of Romanes, as *The Scientific Evidences of Organic Evolution*, *Mental Evolution in Animals*, *Mental*

Evolution in Man, *Darwin and after Darwin*, and *An Examination of Weismannism*. Even he, however, could not accept without demur the theory of natural selection as adequate by itself to explain organic evolution. He is the author of a work embodying his own earliest researches entitled *Starfish, Jellyfish, and Sea Urchins*, and also of an extremely interesting and valuable work on *Animal Intelligence*, the most popular of all his writings.

There was something very winning and attractive about Romanes. But the deepest thing in him was his love of truth, and his honest, fearless, unselfish pursuit of it. Quite early in his career he had signalised his abandonment of the Christian faith by the publication of a work entitled *A Candid Examination of Theism*. Towards the close of his brief life he returned to the faith of his earlier years. This was made known by the fine *Life* of Romanes by his widow, and still more emphatically by his own notes published by Canon Gore after his death, under the title, *Thoughts on Religion*. Professor Romanes died in his forty-seventh year, at his house St Aldate's, Oxford, in 1894.

The literary aptitudes of scientific men during the Victorian period have by no means been confined to biological research. Sir David Brewster as a physicist may thus be placed beside Tyndall. In geology, literature has been well represented by Sir Charles Lyell, the friend of Darwin, and author of *The*

Principles of Geology and *The Antiquity of Man;* by Hugh Miller, the stonemason of Cromarty, whose *Old Red Sandstone* made important additions to scientific knowledge, but who will rather be remembered for the charms of eloquence and poetry of style than for his actual achievements in science. Of his purely literary works *My Schools and Schoolmasters* deserves especial mention. Still later in time come the brothers Geikie, in both of whom, along with the amplest knowledge of their own special subject, is to be found the gift of clear, graceful literary expression. Sir Archibald Geikie was born and educated in Edinburgh, and was from his earliest years a predestined geologist. After occupying for some time the Murchison Professorship of Geology in the University of Edinburgh, he became Director-General of the Geological Survey of the United Kingdom—a position which he still holds. In *The Story of a Boulder*, *The Scenery of Scotland viewed in Connection with its Physical Geology*, his *Text-book of Geology*, *The Ancient Volcanoes of Britain* (1897), and his lives of various eminent men of science, are to be seen the qualities of an admirably lucid and attractive style. James Geikie, LL.D., followed his brother in the Edinburgh Chair of Geology on the removal of the latter to London. In his *Great Ice Age*, *Pre-Historic Europe*, etc., he too adds the charm of attractive form to an adequate scientific equipment. Professor Geikie's literary tastes and accomplishments further appear in his *Songs and Lyrics, by Heinrich Heine*. Astronomy in the hands of Sir Robert Ball has the

same picturesque interest. For this reason his *Story of the Heavens*, *Story of the Sun*, *In Starry Realms*, etc., have had a large circulation, and have called forth unusual interest.

The names of John Stuart Mill and Herbert Spencer must here suffice to represent **British Philosophy** during the Victorian period. Others no doubt there were, such as Hamilton and Ferrier, Whewell and Whately, Mansel and Green. The vast erudition and splendid philosophical powers of Sir William Hamilton caused him during the latter part of his life to be recognised as the foremost representative of British philosophy. Since his death his speculations, although much discredited by other writers, have largely served to keep it alive. He remains therefore one of the germinant forces of British philosophical thought; and it was in controversy with Hamilton that Mill secured much of his reputation as one of the greatest thinkers of the age.

The life of **John Stuart Mill (1806-1873)** is the history of a tremendous experiment in education. A human soul, indeed, was never reared under stranger conditions. Mill never had a youth, yet was of cultured, moral parentage. Almost from his cradle he is made the slave of an iron-bound system, that sees in him only a machine, destitute of either power or will to shape a course for itself. And the avowed object of the system is to create within the tender

years of a child, a power of reasoning, a retentiveness of memory, an understanding of facts and problems such as would be natural only in the cultured intelligence of a mature man. Mill himself deprecated the application to it of the word 'cram,' but surely there never was a more astounding example of forcing. And the pity of it becomes greater when we know that the author of it was the child's own father.

In many ways the elder Mill was one of the most remarkable men of his time. The son of a Scottish farmer, James Mill had won distinction as a University student, and had gone so far as to obtain license as a Presbyterian minister. But at this point his opinions changed, and he never entered upon the duties of the ministerial office. Indeed so great was the change that he seems to have abandoned all religious belief and made an open avowal of scepticism. Having settled in London, he devoted himself to literature, and became widely known as a writer of sound judgment, accurate knowledge, and a singular clearness of exposition and of language on the various subjects in which he was interested. More particularly he was the author of a *History of India* (1818), which brought him into favourable notice, and led to various appointments in connection with the government of the East India Company—appointments which he continued to hold for the rest of his life. In addition to articles contributed to the *Encyclopædia Brittanica*, he wrote the *Elements of Political Economy* and an *Analysis of the Human Mind*. On the basis of such knowledge

of him only, we should have judged James Mill to have been an erudite scholar and an original and acute thinker, especially on subjects connected with the various branches of Mental, Moral, and Political Philosophy. He was an advanced follower of Bentham, and before his son, perhaps the most influential of the band of thinkers, who were known as Philosophical Radicals, and whose organ was the *Westminster Review*. It remained for his greater son, in the sad but exceedingly interesting *Autobiography of John Stuart Mill*, to furnish us with a more interior portrait, and to show how much of the martinet was in his father, and of what unconscious cruelty a one-sided nature like his may be capable.

John Stuart Mill was his eldest son, and may in consequence have suffered from that form of injury that often proceeds from an exaggerated idea of parental responsibility in the case of a first or only child. He was never sent to school, but got all his education from his father, at least until his fourteenth year. The method of that education, as we have seen, proceeded on the principle of forcing into premature, and therefore unnatural, exercise, the purely intellectual powers of the child's mind, and of repressing, as far as might be, his emotional nature, by carefully excluding from his knowledge whatever would be likely to minister to sentiment, imagination, and a sense of poetry. From his earliest years, he was taught, and apparently throughout most if not all of his subsequent life believed, that the idea of

a God was a delusion of the ignorant. He tells us that he had never thrown off religious belief, because he never had it. Poetry, too, was kept far from him. The exquisite idealisings of a child's mind seem to have been almost unknown to him. The enchantments of romance had as little place within his narrow scheme of things as the sublime ideas of religion. He played at no games, had no companions, the latter being deliberately excluded lest they should interfere with the parental plan of education. Life was thus one long strenuous endeavour within a groove from which he was never permitted to deviate by so much as a hair's breadth. It is surprising that even a child should have submitted so meekly to be thus cabined and confined. But, in fact, there are no signs of rebellion in him.

We naturally ask, Where was the mother? How was it possible that folded in the soft corners of her love, the child did not there catch the glints of that warmer and more glowing world from which his father's stern system debarred him? We cannot say. The Autobiography, which has so much to relate concerning the early years of his childhood, tells us nothing of his mother. And yet, from other sources we know that by her personal beauty, and her warm emotional temperament, a quality which he must have inherited from her, she could scarcely have failed to impress deeply the tender heart of a child. In any case the experiment went on unchecked. The results are tabulated in the Autobiography, and form strange

but pitiful reading. At three he began the study of Greek, and before he was eight had done an amount of work that would not have disgraced an undergraduate of twenty. Æsop, Herodotus, Xenophon, Diogenes Laertius, Lucian, Isocrates, and Plato had all been more or less studied by him. In history he had read, during the same period, Robertson, Hume, Gibbon, Watson's *Philip II* and *III*, Hooke's *History of Rome*, Rollin's *Ancient History*, Langhorne's *Translation of Plutarch*, Burnet's *History of His Own Times*, Mosheim's *Ecclesiastical History*, M'Crie's *Life of John Knox*, and various others. Nor was any part of this work done lightly. He was made to give a verbal account of what he had read to his father, and if the latter added any explanations, the child was required to restate them afterwards in his own words. 'Of children's books,' says he, 'any more than of playthings, I had scarcely any, except an occasional gift from a relation or acquaintance.' Fortunately among such books were *Robinson Crusoe*, *The Arabian Nights*, and *Don Quixote*, and the enjoyment of these was doubtless the boy's intellectual salvation.

In his eighth year he commenced learning Latin, and before he was twelve, he had gone through a formidable array of the Latin classics. During the same period he had made considerable progress in Mathematics. At the age of twelve he entered upon the thorough and systematic study of Logic, of the value of which as a mental gymnastic, his father had the highest opinion. In this his son agreed with

him. 'I know of nothing in my education,' says he, 'to which I think myself more indebted for whatever capacity of thinking I have attained.' To these subjects were added Oratory and Political Economy, and in this fashion Mill's studies proceeded until his fourteenth year, when his direct instruction at his father's hands ceased. Reviewing the whole period of his childhood, if childhood it can be called, Mill seems disposed to congratulate himself on the results obtained. He repudiates the idea that he was educated on a system of cram, alleging that he was never told anything that could be found out by thinking. Moreover he expresses the opinion that in quickness of apprehension, retentiveness of memory, and energy of character, he was rather below than above par, and that results quite as striking could be obtained in the case of any boy or girl of average ability. But if it be admitted that a human mind was never more carefully, and successfully, disciplined to become a perfect instrument of thought; if, moreover, a greater quantity of serviceable learning can seldom have been gathered together at the same age, is there nothing to set on the other side? As he looks back from the close of life, the review plainly does not altogether satisfy Mill himself. More than anything else he had gained in analytical power. But logical analysis is not everything.

He regrets, and justly, that he suffered in physical development. He knew nothing of games, was no match for other boys at any kind of physical exercise,

and throughout life was clumsy in the use of his hands. He suffered no less at quite the opposite pole of his being. For we have seen how the spiritual elements of his nature were starved. It cannot even be said that the moral stimulus that comes from the sanctions of religion were supplied by love and reverence for his father. The latter was stern, irritable, and exacting, and, as his son says, fear of him dried up his children's affection at its source. There can be no doubt that Mill's temperament was warmly emotional, and that naturally he was endowed with a peculiar intensity of feeling ; and yet during the first fourteen years of his life, when character was being so sedulously formed within him, feeling was permitted no outlet. As soon, however, as he is emancipated from the direct control of his father, the sense of beauty, especially in connection with natural scenery, and a susceptibility to the influence of poetry, become potent in his life. To him as to Carlyle there comes after a time a great crisis when all things seem to be slipping from under his feet ; and then he tells us it is the poetry of Wordsworth that recalls the vividness of life, and rescues him from despair. The analytical power—the power of looking at everything in the cold, steely light of the logical reason—was thus Mill's chief inheritance from the discipline of his early years ; but it is not unreasonable to suppose that if his education had been conducted on more liberal and human principles, so as to produce the balanced and harmonious development of his whole nature, he might have been a

greater, stronger, and more original man than he actually proved. Even in relation to intellectual problems, much of his later life was a slow and painful unlearning of what had been instilled into him in his early years.

It was altogether fortunate for him that he should have gone to make a long stay of more than a year with the family of Sir Samuel Bentham in a French Chateau, just when he was passing from under the direct instruction of his father. He was thus introduced to a family life very different from that to which he had been accustomed, to people some of whom were near his own age, to the language, institutions, and manners of a strange nation that deeply interested him, and, in a visit to the Pyrenees, to grand and impressive scenery, the influence of which in calling into exercise the emotional elements of Mill's nature, it is scarcely possible to over-estimate.

On his return to England he gave himself to psychological study, and carried on various readings in law, history and philosophy. In 1823 he entered the India House as clerk, a connection which lasted till the transference of the company's dominions to the Crown in 1858, thirty-five years later. When that event came, John Stuart Mill was the head of the office, and the government rewarded his services with a pension of £1500 a year. Between 1821 and 1840 he published many articles in the *Westminster* and other reviews, on subjects that showed his pre-eminent capacity for the discussion of abstract problems in politics,

philosophy, and political economy. In 1843 appeared his first great work, *A System of Logic, Ratiocinative and Inductive*, on which his reputation still mainly rests. *The Principles of Political Economy*, followed in 1848, and attracted the attention of all thinking men. A third great work appeared in 1865 as *An Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy*. Treatises on *Liberty* and *Utilitarianism* are also to be included in Mill's important contributions to the literature of British Philosophy. In all are to be seen the writer's remarkable powers of argument, his great intellectual force, and that carefulness as to forms of expression, which makes his works, of all the philosophical writings of the century, the most intelligible and attractive. Nothing, as he explains, was put from his hand, until it had been subjected again and again to the most careful processes of revision. It would be out of place here even to attempt to summarise the subject matter of such works as these by inquiring how far Mill's philosophy was empirical as Locke's and Hume's was; in what sense he accepted 'happiness' as the end of life; and whether or not his theories as an economist tended to socialism.

Great though Mill was as an abstract thinker, as a practical politician he must be pronounced a failure. In 1865 he was returned as Member of Parliament for Westminster in circumstances that reflected great honour upon him; but on the whole his public career was a disappointment. The wave of popularity that had carried his election so triumphantly was soon

spent, and in the General Election of 1868 he was defeated at the poll by Mr W. H. Smith. His failure can certainly not be ascribed to any lack of acquaintance with the problems of politics, far less to any lack of either zeal or ability in the discharge of his duties. More probably it was the result of a defective knowledge of men due to the limitations of his early training. Besides, he was outwardly cold and reserved in manner, and was wanting in the qualities of the orator and popular debater.. A strain of eccentricity is also observable in the warmth of his advocacy of certain causes, such as the Enfranchisement of Women and the Irish Question.

After a few years of retirement, broken by several illnesses, Mill died at Avignon in 1873. After his death appeared his interesting *Autobiography* and *Three Essays on Religion*, which were a surprise to every one, because of the impression which they gave, that Mill who had always been regarded as a pronounced sceptic, was nearer orthodox beliefs than could have reasonably been supposed. A careful study of this great man's character shows him to have been simple and honest, earnest and conscientious, ready to give due weight to opinions contrary to his own, and a sincere lover of his kind. The most striking weakness in a character that was generally so strong is to be seen in the want of control over his emotional nature, and the extravagances of laudation, as in the case of his wife, into which he is thus betrayed.

Herbert Spencer (1820). Herbert Spencer, the most comprehensive and influential of modern thinkers, was born at Derby in 1820. Hereditary influences, as well as certain favourable circumstances of his youth, doubtless contributed to make him the man he afterwards became. His father was a schoolmaster of decided ability, force of character, scientific tastes, and advanced educational ideas. He was opposed to the methods usually pursued in schools, and thought that too much time was given to the acquisition of a mass of unconnected and undigested facts of little use towards true culture and a fit preparation for life. The proper business of the educator therefore, in his opinion, is less to communicate knowledge than to discipline the child's own faculties, especially by training it to habits of careful observation and right reasoning.

It did not seem, however, that his son Herbert was likely to illustrate favourably any theory of education, although he actually lived to incorporate many of his father's enlightened ideas in his own admirable work on Education. He was seven before he learned to read, and continued to be a backward pupil, to whom the whole business of school was difficult and hateful. He learned anything with extreme difficulty, and forgot it as soon as it was learned. For languages he had no aptitude whatever, and apparently never acquired a knowledge of any language except his own, classical or foreign. His traffic indeed was little with books of any kind. On the other hand, he was a keen observer, the philosophising element was highly

developed in him, and in the unusual activity of his reasoning and generalising powers, we can see distinctly the germs of those qualities that afterwards so highly distinguished him. In observing his father's, and also his uncle's emphatic attitude towards various social problems and public movements, and in listening to their animated discussions on such subjects with other kindred spirits, the boy had the opportunity not only of acquiring much useful information, but also of developing in himself an unusual talent for controversy, and for grappling with great intellectual, moral, and social problems.

Of school subjects proper the only one for which he showed any true liking or aptitude was mathematics, but when it was seriously proposed that he should continue his mathematical studies at Cambridge, he positively declined. Thus it came to pass that he never had either a public school or a university training, and notwithstanding the inevitable loss involved in this, when we consider how little the formal academic studies common in such institutions at that time were in accord with the rationalising and practical bent of his own genius, the fact need not be seriously regretted. There does not seem to have been any one calling to which the young Spencer was specially drawn, although it did for a time appear as if engineering was going to be his life occupation. Several years, in fact, were efficiently devoted to this work, but when the disastrous collapse of railway speculation came, he found his occupation gone. It was only now, therefore,

about his twenty-sixth year, that he took up his abode in London, and began to find for himself a career in literature. In 1842 he wrote a series of letters for the *Nonconformist* on 'The Proper Sphere of Government,' and in 1848 became sub-editor on the staff of the *Economist*. In 1850 appeared his first really important work, *Social Statics*, in which are to be found hints of his great theory of Evolution as an explanation of the progress of society. During the next four years he became acquainted with many remarkable persons, including John Stuart Mill, George Henry Lewes, George Eliot, and her friends the Brays and Hennells of Coventry. During these years also he contributed numerous articles to the *Westminster* and other reviews, on such subjects as 'The Development Hypothesis,' 'The Philosophy of Style,' 'The Genesis of Science,' and 'The Art of Education.' All of them show the working of the author's mind along the line of thought that he was ere long to make so distinctively his own. It is specially worthy of note that in his paper on 'The Development Hypothesis,' published in 1852, seven years before Darwin's *Origin of Species* appeared, Spencer had quite distinctly outlined a theory of organic evolution, in terms which might have been those of Darwin himself. But the evolutionary trend of Spencer's opinions becomes still more distinctly visible in his *Principles of Psychology* published in 1855, for the central aim of this work is to show how all the faculties and operations of mind can be explained by

Evolution. *The Principles of Psychology* was afterwards incorporated in the monumental *Synthetic Philosophy* by which the strenuous labours of a lifetime have at length been crowned and completed.

The strain put upon him in 1855 by the composition of *The Principles of Psychology* resulted in a complete breakdown of health, causing entire abstinence from literary labour for the next eighteen months. Indeed, he was ever afterwards an invalid, liable at intervals to be completely prostrated, and at his best incapable of more than three hours' work daily. The patience, the courage, the almost heroic persistency with which, notwithstanding these disadvantages, he pursued his great work to its close in 1896, are themselves wonderful, but become even more astonishing when we know that his successive publications, far from being a source of revenue to him, have in many cases proved a serious pecuniary loss. We rightly make much of a man like Nansen who has braved the dangers and solitudes of the frozen North in eager search for the physical Pole; but we are apt to overlook the no less heroic qualities, and the far more tremendous labours, of such a man as Spencer, who gives forty years of his life to prodigious researches and the most arduous speculations in search of what may be called the Polar thought of the Universe—the grand conception that will explain the progress of all matter, and life, and human institutions from the beginning until now.

No less than this is what Spencer sought to do.

Darwin applied the doctrine of Evolution to the development of Organic Life only; and by his vast accumulations and admirable ordering of biological facts has undoubtedly done more than any other man to place it almost beyond dispute. But Spencer went far beyond that. He showed how Evolution might account not only for the development of animal and plant life on the globe, but also for the genesis of worlds, the slow upbuilding of the earth into its present form, the grouping of human beings into races and nations, and the rise and expansion of language and of law, of philosophy and of government, of morality and of religion, and of all social institutions from their crude germ in the rudimentary ideas of the earliest untutored ages to their full flower and fruit in the marvellous civilisations of the nineteenth century. Truly a sublime and comprehensive theory, which, even more completely than Darwin's, seems to realise once again the cosmical grandeur of the Newtonian Conception of a unity of power and of law binding together all things within the universe.

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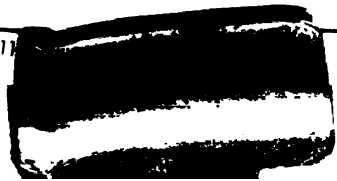
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